

## UN-Forgiven: The Resurrection of Christ

"Islam is a religion in which God requires you to send your son to die for him. Christianity is a faith in which God sends his son to die for you."

A man was blissfully driving along the highway, when he saw the Easter Bunny hopping across the middle of the road. He swerved to avoid hitting the Bunny, but unfortunately the rabbit jumped in front of his car and was hit. The basket of eggs went flying all over the place. Candy, too.

The driver, being a sensitive man as well as an animal lover, pulled over to the side of the road, and got out to see what had become of the Bunny carrying the basket. Much to his dismay, the colorful Bunny was dead.

The driver felt guilty and began to cry.

A woman driving down the same highway saw the man crying on the side of the road and pulled over. She stepped out of her car and asked the man what was wrong.

"I feel terrible," he explained. "I accidentally hit the Easter Bunny and killed it. There may not be an Easter because of me. What should I do? "

The woman told the man not to worry. She knew exactly what to do. She went to her car trunk, and pulled out a spray can. She walked over to the limp, dead Bunny, and sprayed the entire contents of the can onto the little furry animal.

Miraculously the Easter Bunny came to back life, jumped up, picked up the spilled eggs and candy, waved its paw at the two humans and hopped on down the road. 50 yards away the Easter Bunny stopped, turned around, waved and hopped on down the road another 50 yards, turned, waved, hopped another 50 yards and waved again!!!!

The man was astonished.

He said to the woman, " What was it that you sprayed on the Easter Bunny?"

The woman turned the can around so that the man could read the label.

It said: "Hair spray. Restores life to dead hair. Adds permanent wave."

In a sense this joke is a resurrection story!

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most monumental, pivotal event in human history. It is so important and world changing that I feel overwhelmed by its magnitude, and incapable of addressing this event with words that it is worthy of. Today you will have a choice though, to walk out of this place forgiven or remain unforgiven. The offer will be made to all of us. It is the offer of the Resurrection.

I wish we could go back to that event 2000 years ago, and be there when Mary Magdalene arrives at the tomb, soul and heart crushed by the loss of her rabbi and teacher.

- To know of her love for Jesus, we need to know that Jesus had delivered her from 7 demons.
- Some accounts say she is the prostitute who washed his feet with her tears and dried them with her hair.
- Mary is the last to leave the scene of the crucifixion, the last to leave the tomb after burial, and the first to arrive on the scene of the empty tomb on Sunday morning.

I watch with awe and wonder when someone is willing to give such devotion, one who is willing to embrace the pain and sadness that she embraced; to be so close to the suffering of Jesus and to linger and wait and watch.

If you have ever been in close proximity to someone's intense suffering, you know the price of intimacy that it demands.

Mary didn't hide from the pain she shared with Jesus, she didn't run from it, she went beyond merely encountering the pain, she embraced it.

Mary chose to travel through it instead of trying to avoid it by going around it.

It is clear that she has a devotion to Jesus that transcends even her own pain or discomfort, that goes beyond the ache of mourning. She is devoted to Jesus.

That devotion is the result of love. The love that comes when your life has been changed by someone else's love for you. Mary's devotion is remarkable.

1. Contrast this to another of Jesus' followers, his closest disciple, Peter.
  - a. Impetuous Peter, who was quick to speak, to confirm Jesus as the Messiah and moments later be rebuked for not wanting to hear that Jesus would have to suffer and die.
  - b. Peter who proclaimed loudly that he would never leave Jesus, yet loudly and with curses, denies him not just once, but three times.
  - c. And then catches that intimate glance from Jesus while Jesus is being beaten and then knows the pain of his own failure.
  - d. Peter, who goes away and weeps bitterly, and according to the scriptures, was probably walking away.
2. Peter loved Jesus as his teacher and friend.
  - a. But Peter had a much different relationship with Jesus than Mary did...Mary knew Jesus as more than just a teacher and friend.
  - b. Mary knew Him as her DELIVERER and for that, she was DEVOTED to him.

- i. Just like the song we sang, “He touched Me”...Mary’s life was turned right side up by Jesus and it affected the way she lived.
- c. Peter on the other hand followed Jesus as a DISCIPLE, or as a student.
  - i. Jesus’ sayings were DOCTRINES to Peter.

*Lets look now at the scene on Saturday after the Crucifixion and Burial:*

1. While Mary was lingering close to the pain of her Deliverer, Peter was in his own torment, believing himself a terrible failure, and rightly so, he had denied knowing the person who had given him three precious years of his life.
  - a. Peter, not content to just deny Jesus, went so far as to call down curses on himself while denying Him.
  - b. Then it seems, he separates himself from the rest of the disciples, and he spends the weekend alone, probably pondering what to do next in a life without Jesus and a life where he has to live with a feeling of failure
  - c. Perhaps you can relate to Peter, because you have walked away from Jesus sometime in the past and are standing at a distance...or you have denied Christ by your life-style and wonder...is it worth coming back?.
2. The other disciples are in hiding, having been terrified by the armed mob sent by the priests and Pharisees, and are all wondering if they will be next.
  - a. Anyone with association with Jesus has a reason to be afraid. It would be not unlike the inner circle of Saddam Hussein being wanted for “questioning” and possible prosecution...they were making themselves scarce from the authorities.
3. And in the midst of all of these conflicting emotions, on Sunday morning we can only imagine what happened when they found the tomb empty, and they heard the words of the angel: *“Don’t be alarmed, you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter.”*
  - a. Those telling two words...”and Peter” let us know of Peter’s dilemma – He is alone. He is rejected...he is in great self pain. Go tell the disciples AND PETER.
  - b. And then, we have the account from the book of John 20:1-7

*“Early Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. <sup>2</sup>She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, “They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and I don't know where they have put him!”*

*<sup>3</sup>Peter and the other disciple ran to the tomb to see. <sup>4</sup>The other disciple outran Peter and got there first. <sup>5</sup>He stooped and looked in and saw the linen cloth lying there, but he didn't go in. <sup>6</sup>Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, <sup>7</sup>while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying to the side.*

We can perhaps get a taste of what Peter felt in those hours before Sunday morning and then in the moments after finding the empty tomb in a song that Don Francisco sang...the words to which I will read to you as if it were a poem:

### HE'S ALIVE

The gates and doors were barred and all the windows fastened down.

I spent the night in sleeplessness and rose at every sound,  
Half in hopeless sorrow and half in fear the day  
Would find the soldiers breaking through to drag us all away.

And just before the sunrise, I heard something at the wall.  
The gate began to rattle, and a voice began to call.  
I hurried to the window and looked down into the street  
Expecting swords and torches and the sound of soldiers feet.

There was no one there but Mary, so I went down to let her in.  
John stood there beside me as she told us where she'd been.  
She said they've moved Him in the night and none of us knows where.  
The stone's been rolled away and now His body isn't there.

We both ran t'ward the garden, and then John ran on ahead.  
We found the stone and the empty tomb just the way that Mary said.  
But the winding sheet they wrapped Him in was just an empty shell,  
And how or where they'd taken Him was more than I could tell.

Something strange had happened there; just what I didn't know.  
John believed a miracle, but I just turned to go.  
Circumstance and speculation didn't lift me very high  
'Cause I'd seen them crucify Him, and then I saw Him die.

Back inside the house again, the guilt and anguish came.  
Everything I'd promised Him just added to my shame.  
When at last it came to choices, I denied I knew His Name,  
And, even if He was alive, it wouldn't be the same.

Suddenly, the air was filled with a strange and sweet perfume.  
Light that came from everywhere drove shadows from the room.  
Jesus stood before me with His arms held open wide,  
And I fell down on my knees, and I just clung to Him and cried.

He raised me to my feet, and as I looked into His eyes  
Love was shining out from them like sunlight from the skies.  
Guilt and my confusion disappeared in sweet release,  
And every fear I'd ever had just melted into peace.

He's alive, He's alive,  
He've alive, and I'm forgiven.  
Heaven's Gates are opened wide.

He's alive, He's alive, He's alive.....He's alive !!!

1. Perhaps you can relate to Peter's reaction, his relief.
  - a. His sudden recognition that Jesus was alive and that he was forgiven.
  - b. It was a change in his relationship with Jesus.
  - c. Up to this point, Jesus was his teacher, Peter was the DISCIPLE...but now Peter's life has been turned RIGHT-SIDE-UP.
  - d. His encounter with Jesus is no longer as a student or learner to a teacher or mentor.
  - e. His encounter is now in the realm of the supernatural, in the realm of REDEMPTION and FORGIVENESS.
  - f. Just as Mary had known Jesus this way as her DELIVERER, now Peter's relationship with Jesus had changed. And now, Peter had changed as well.
  
2. What about you? Is Jesus just a doctrine to you?
  - a. Or have you experienced DELIVERANCE?
  - b. You will know that by the level of DEVOTION you have toward Him.
    - i. If He is but a doctrine, an idea to believe in, a historical person who did great things, a teacher...then your relationship to him will be like Peter's before the resurrection.
    - ii. You will be filled with good intentions (like Peter) and numbed by broken promises.
    - iii. Church will be a duty instead of someplace you can't wait to be at.
    - iv. Worship will be a chore instead of a delight.
    - v. You may prefer to see God from afar instead of up close and personal.
    - vi. You will set the priorities for your life and God will be an afterthought.
    - vii. Intimacy with God is a foreign idea to you that better fits zealots than rational people like yourself.
    - viii. And it is because you have not PERSONALLY experienced what Jesus came to do for you.

3. But if Jesus has touched your life, you know something is different. You are like Mary Magdalene.
  - a. You are the last to leave and the first to arrive.
  - b. You cannot wait to be near Jesus.
  - c. To hear His voice and to share in His plans for the world and other people's lives.
  - d. You want to be a part turning the world right-side up.
  - e. But... You can experience a life change today that will allow you to know personally the love and forgiveness and redemption and deliverance God offers.
    - i. But you must not run away.
    - ii. You must not deny him today.
  
4. You can make the greatest choice of your life today or make the most tragic decision of your life today.
  - a. Because... **If Christ is raised, you gain everything by trusting in him or lose everything by rejecting him.**
    - i. Note especially John 19:30. Jesus' cry from the cross is "It is finished." This the Greek word *tetelestai*. This word was used in commerce at the time. It was often written across a bill to indicate that the bill was *paid in full*.
    - ii. The resurrection is the receipt that God gave humanity that Jesus' death did, indeed, pay the full price of our sins.
    - iii. The world's sins are not enough to keep Christ in the grave! His resurrection is proof that our sins are forgiven!
    - iv. Jesus HAD TO DIE for our sins. Our sins deserved death. He had to pay the ransom for them or we would have to pay the price ourselves.
    - v. But the resurrection means that no sin is so heinous that we cannot be forgiven and that we cannot forgive ourselves.
      1. Some of you have done some pretty foul things in your time.
      2. The empty tomb means that they're forgotten and forgiven if you will place your faith and life in the hands of Jesus!
  
5. Or... Perhaps you have wandered away from God this past year or more.
  - a. Easter is the message that no matter how terrible your life has been or how badly you feel about yourself, there is hope and forgiveness for you available in Jesus Christ.
  - b. If you have wandered away from Jesus,... this Resurrection Sunday you can return, because Resurrection Sunday has a powerful lesson for you:
  - c. *Romans 6:5 tells us: "For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of his death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection!"*

- i. The bible tells us that when we are baptized “into Christ” we are baptized (immersed) into his death, and when we come out of the water, we are “raised” with Him.
- ii. This symbolic action of baptism also illustrates what happened when we became Christians. We died to our old way of life...
- iii. The way of life that was self-lived, self-run, self-motivated
- iv. And rose to a new life, one that is
  1. Controlled by the spirit of God, led by God, and motivated by God.
  2. If you are not experiencing a life that is controlled, led and motivated by God, then you should ask yourself...have I really died with Christ?
    - a. *Colossians 3:3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*
  3. Ask yourself: “Have I ever done any more than simply profess belief in my brain but never trust him with my heart and soul?”
  4. “Does he rule me or do I rule me?”
  5. If you really have believed Jesus Christ is raised from the dead, then you must allow Jesus and His claims to rule you.
    - a. He paid for you.
    - b. He did so by paying his life as a ransom for you...and last week we learned that a ransom is due for sin.
    - c. And we cannot pay it ourselves.
    - d. We are helpless...unless someone pays it for us.
    - e. And Jesus paid it...every last drop, every last penny of it.
  6. And how could anyone dare to live a self-run life after hearing that?

- v. It was Easter Day, 1973. Uganda groaned under the terror of Idi Amin. Still fresh in young Pastor Kefa Sempangi's memory was a face burned beyond recognition, the sight of soldiers cruelly beating a man, and the horrible sound of boots crushing bones. all for the crime of being Christian. But that Easter of 1973 Sempangi bravely and openly preached on the risen Lord in his town's football stadium to over 7,000 people. After the service, five of Idi Amin's Secret Police followed Sempangi back to his little church and closed the door behind them. Five rifles pointed at Sempangi's face.
- vi. "We are going to kill you for disobeying Amin's orders" said the captain. "If you have something to say, say it before you die." Sempangi, thinking of his beautiful wife and lovely little girl, began to shake. But the risen Lord living in his heart gave him the courage to speak. "Do what you must," he said. "The Word of God says that in Christ I am already dead, and that my real life is hidden with Him in God. It is not my life that is in danger, but yours. I am alive in the risen Lord but you are still dead in your sins. May He spare you from eternal destruction."

vii. The leader looked at Sempangi for a long time. Then he lowered his gun and said, "Will you pray for us?" Sempangi did, and from that day those five officers, now converted through the witness of Sempangi's bravery, protected the pastor with their very lives. :  
viii.

You see, there are two kinds of people in this room: Those who are dead in their sins, and those who are dead to their sins. Those who are dead to their sins are like pastor Sempangi...they have received Jesus Christ as their savior, they have received his promise of everlasting life and follow Him in a life of gratitude. They are no longer living for this world, they live for their savior.

Those who are dead in their sins are like those soldiers. They live for this world and for what they can get. If you have not received Jesus as your personal savior, if you have rejected the idea of trusting him alone for your future, then the bible says you are dead IN your sins. That means you are dead to God...

Jesus came to pay the price of being reconciled to God...This is the message of Easter. Will you reject the best God has, just to continue to pursue a self led life? Or will you stop running today? Today is the day of salvation. Today, you can end the lie and become alive to God!

Won't you do that today?

## Three significant Points:

- Christ is raised. We have incredible evidence for his resurrection, which I won't be going into here, but the most noteworthy is that his tiny band of scattered followers, fearful and afraid, in hiding and dejected, had their attitudes changed in a heartbeat by their encounter with the risen Christ. When they saw he was alive, their lives were changed. What they had based their life upon before was no longer relevant.

### 1. If Christ is raised, you and your loved ones will have a resurrection too.

- a. Communism and atheism believes that this life is all there is,
  - i. and Darwinism and evolution believe that man was not uniquely created but is instead an accident of nature and no more valuable than a snail, a frog or a hog...
- b. We believe that the resurrection is the foundational truth of the Christian faith. If you do not have a risen savior, you might as well embrace atheistic Darwinism, because you have no hope.
  - i. **1 Co. 15:14,17** -- "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith . . . And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."
  - ii. 1 Cor 15:20-26: ¶ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

### 2. If Christ is Raised, you have been forgiven...if you place your trust in Him.

- i. **Romans 4:25** -- *"He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification."*
  1. Christ's resurrection from the dead means that His mission was successful and that our sins were forgiven on the cross.
  2. Christ's resurrection means that God did declare us righteous (justify us) through the death of His Son.
  3. But if Christ had not risen from the dead, then He would have failed to do what He claimed He had come to do: to be a ransom for the sins of many (Mark 10:45).
  4. And if He has failed in His mission, our sins are not forgiven and there is no Gospel and no Savior to have faith in.
  5. Thus our faith is useless.
  6. If Jesus Christ is not raised from the dead, then God's redemptive acts end in a dead end street.
  7. If Christ is not raised, there is no assurance that God is living...because death then has the last word.

- a. And faith is futile, because if Christ is not raised, you and I are still in our sins.
    - b. And we will be the most miserable of men.
  - 8. It is for this reason that Christ's resurrection, even more than His crucifixion, was at the heart of the Apostolic preaching (as it is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles).
    - b. But if Christ is raised, we are told by the bible that we will also be raised at the last judgement, we will not be “disembodied spirits,” but have new “spiritual bodies” (different than our physical ones) but probably not unlike the body Jesus wore after his resurrection which walked through walls, and consumed food.
      - i. You can count on a future that makes the present mean something.
3. If Christ is raised, you died and were raised with him (if you place your faith in him)
- 4.

## The Resurrection of Christ

<sup>1</sup>Now let me remind you, dear brothers and sisters, <sup>E26</sup> of the Good News I preached to you before. You welcomed it then and still do now, **for your faith is built on this wonderful message.** <sup>2</sup>And it is this Good News that saves you if you firmly believe it—unless, of course, you believed something that was never true in the first place.

<sup>3</sup>I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me—that **Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said.** <sup>4</sup>He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, as the Scriptures said. <sup>5</sup>He was seen by Peter <sup>E27</sup> and then by the twelve apostles. <sup>6</sup>After that, he was seen by more than five hundred of his followers <sup>E28</sup> at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died by now. <sup>7</sup>Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. <sup>8</sup>Last of all, I saw him, too, long after the others, as though I had been born at the wrong time. <sup>9</sup>For I am the least of all the apostles, and I am not worthy to be called an apostle after the way I persecuted the church of God.

<sup>10</sup>But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor on me—and not without results. For I have worked harder than all the other apostles, yet it was not I but God who was working through me by his grace. <sup>11</sup>So it makes no difference whether I preach or they preach. The important thing is that you believed what we preached to you.

## The Resurrection of the Dead

<sup>12</sup>But tell me this—since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup>For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either. **<sup>14</sup>And if Christ was not raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your trust in God is useless.** <sup>15</sup>And we apostles would all be lying about God, for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave, but that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead. <sup>16</sup>If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. **<sup>17</sup>And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless, and you are still under condemnation for your sins.** <sup>18</sup>In that case, all who have died believing in Christ have perished! <sup>19</sup>**And if we have hope in Christ only for this life, we are the most miserable people in the world.**

<sup>20</sup>But the fact is that Christ has been raised from the dead. He has become the first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again.

<sup>21</sup>So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, Adam, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man, Christ. <sup>22</sup>Everyone dies because all of us are related to Adam, the first man. But all who are related to Christ, the other man, will be given new life. <sup>23</sup>But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised first; then when Christ comes back, **all his people will be raised.**

<sup>24</sup>After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having put down all enemies of every kind. <sup>E29</sup> <sup>25</sup>For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. <sup>26</sup>And the last enemy to be destroyed is death. <sup>27</sup>For the Scriptures say, "God has given him authority over all things." <sup>E30</sup> (Of course, when it says "authority over all things," it does not include God himself, who gave Christ his authority.) <sup>28</sup>Then, when he has conquered all things, the Son will present himself to God, so that God, who gave his Son authority over all things, will be utterly supreme over everything everywhere.

<sup>29</sup>If the dead will not be raised, then what point is there in people being baptized for those who are dead? Why do it unless the dead will someday rise again?

<sup>30</sup>And why should we ourselves be continually risking our lives, facing death hour by hour? <sup>31</sup>For I swear, dear brothers and sisters, I face death daily. This is as certain as my pride in what the Lord Jesus Christ has done in you. <sup>32</sup>And what value was there in fighting wild beasts—those men of Ephesus <sup>E31</sup> —if there will be no resurrection from the dead? If there is no resurrection,

"Let's feast and get drunk,  
for tomorrow we die!" <sup>E82</sup>

<sup>33</sup>Don't be fooled by those who say such things, for "bad company corrupts good character." <sup>34</sup>Come to your senses and stop sinning. For to your shame I say that some of you don't even know God.

### The Resurrection Body

<sup>35</sup>But someone may ask, "How will the dead be raised? What kind of bodies will they have?" <sup>36</sup>What a foolish question! When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn't grow into a plant unless it dies first. <sup>37</sup>And what you put in the ground is not the plant that will grow, but only a dry little seed of wheat or whatever it is you are planting. <sup>38</sup>Then God gives it a new body—just the kind he wants it to have. A different kind of plant grows from each kind of seed. <sup>39</sup>And just as there are different kinds of seeds and plants, so also there are different kinds of flesh—whether of humans, animals, birds, or fish.

<sup>40</sup>There are bodies in the heavens, and there are bodies on earth. The glory of the heavenly bodies is different from the beauty of the earthly bodies. <sup>41</sup>The sun has one kind of glory, while the moon and stars each have another kind. And even the stars differ from each other in their beauty and brightness.

<sup>42</sup>It is the same way for the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies, which die and decay, will be different when they are resurrected, for they will never die. <sup>43</sup>Our bodies now disappoint us, but when they are raised, they will be full of glory. They are weak now, but when they are raised, they will be full of power. <sup>44</sup>They are natural human bodies now, but when they are raised, they will be spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, so also there are spiritual bodies.

<sup>45</sup>The Scriptures tell us, "The first man, Adam, became a living person." <sup>E83</sup> But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit. <sup>46</sup>What came first was the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later. <sup>47</sup>Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven. <sup>48</sup>Every human being has an earthly body just like Adam's, but our heavenly bodies will be just like Christ's. <sup>49</sup>Just as we are now like Adam, the man of the earth, so we will someday be like Christ, the man from heaven.

<sup>50</sup>What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These perishable bodies of ours are not able to live forever.

<sup>51</sup>But let me tell you a wonderful secret God has revealed to us. Not all of us will die, but we will all be transformed. <sup>52</sup>It will happen in a moment, in the blinking of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, the Christians who have died <sup>E84</sup> will be raised with transformed bodies. And then we who are living will be transformed so that we will never die. **<sup>53</sup>For our perishable earthly bodies must be transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die.**

<sup>54</sup>When this happens—when our perishable earthly bodies have been transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die—then at last the Scriptures will come true:

"Death is swallowed up in victory." <sup>E85</sup>

<sup>55</sup> O death, where is your victory?  
O death, where is your sting?" <sup>E86</sup>

<sup>56</sup>For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. <sup>57</sup>How we thank God, who gives us victory over sin and death through Jesus Christ our Lord!

<sup>58</sup>So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and steady, always enthusiastic about the Lord's work, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.

