

CAPITOL STUDIES

APRIL 13, 2022 • WEEK 16



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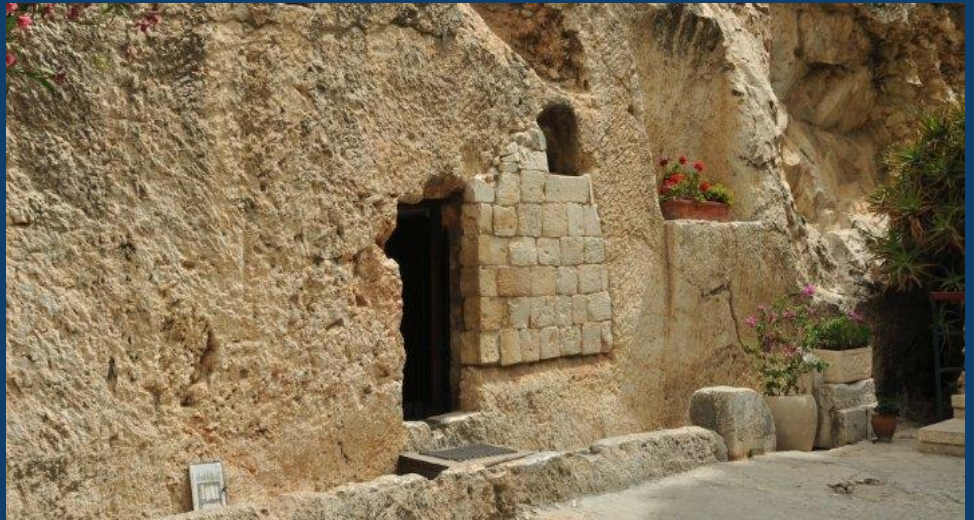


*Verse of
the Week*

1 Cor. 15:3-4

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins...⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

Easter's First Importance



AS SPRING ROLLS into its season and nature comes to life again, we cannot help but reflect on the new spiritual life that comes through a new birth, being “born again.” This “New Birth” is only possible because there is Someone who has conquered death. Who is that Someone? It is Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord.

Arin Hess

Pastor Arin Hess
Chaplain, Capitol Studies

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Happy Easter



INTRODUCTION

“There is no death to those who have entered into fellowship with [Christ] who emerged from the tomb. Because the Resurrection is true, it is the most significant thing in our world today. Bringing the resurrected Christ into our lives, individual and national, is the only hope we have for making a better world. ‘Because I live, ye shall live also.’ That is the message of Easter.”¹ And this makes for the only future worthy of our lives.

I. THE GOSPEL OF FIRST IMPORTANCE

1 Corinthians 15:1-2

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, ²by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.²

Here Paul begins to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, “the good news.” In his earlier letter to the Romans, Paul said he was “not ashamed of the gospel” (Romans 1:16). The expression “the gospel” might be rendered “‘news that makes one happy’ or ‘information that causes one joy’ or ‘words that bring smiles’ or ‘a message that causes the heart to be sweet.’”³

What *is* this “good news”? The good news Paul speaks of here is that it is possible for “someone to experience divine salvation... ‘God decided... to save those who believe’ (1 Corinthians 1:21).”⁴ This means God wants to rescue and deliver us from the punishment and power of sin. He wants us to one day live with Him forever in the bliss and perfection of Heaven.

1 Corinthians 15:3a

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received,

This “first importance” is rendered as this: “first of all (*en prōtois*). Among first things. This is *In Primis* not to time, but to importance.”⁵ Paul thinks that what He has “received” (and believed), is the most important thing of all, and he wants others to know.

II. CHRIST DIED

1 Corinthians 15:3b

That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

A. The Person of God

“CHRIST” (*Christos*) is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *Messiah*, meaning “the anointed” or “the chosen” one. The Jews had been looking for their Messiah as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of a coming Deliverer or Savior. Paul says this Messiah has come. He is the greatest Individual of all time, the only Man to have lived a perfect, sinless life. He is the God-Man. His name is Jesus *Christ*, the Savior of mankind.



B. The Payment of God

“DIED” (*apothnesko* here in 1 Corinthians 15) refers not to a figurative but to a literal death of Christ with eternal spiritual ramifications. “FOR” (*huper*) expresses the idea of substitution or the substitutionary aspect of Jesus’ death. Thus, *huper* could be translated “Christ dies for my sins, instead of me, or as a substitute for me.” Elsewhere Paul says, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for (*huper*) us” (Romans 5:8). Peter likewise says, “For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit” (1 Peter 3:18).

C. The Problem of Sin

“SINS” (*hamartia*) originally conveyed the idea of missing the mark, such as when hunting with a bow and arrow. It then came to mean missing or falling short of any goal, standard, or purpose. In a spiritual sense, *hamartia* means missing the true and ultimate purpose God has for me, falling short of His standard of holiness, acting contrary to His will and Word, and departing from doing what is right. God is holy, and He cannot tolerate sin. It is not just that He *will not* tolerate it; He *cannot* tolerate it.

If you were to stand before God with sin in your life, He would have to remove you from His presence. “Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You cannot look on wickedness with favor” (Habakkuk 1:13). Since we are all sinners, we cannot come into God’s presence as we are. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all” (James 2:10). “For the wages of sin is death,” (Romans 6:23). We all have punishment to face because of our sin.

Yet, God in His great love reached out to us by sending His Son to take that punishment for us. He took our sins and offers us His righteousness in its place. “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf (the sin substitute), so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). “The blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanses us from *all* sin” (1 John 1:7). “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Ray Stedman says, “Ask people today what the gospel is... and this is often what they will say, ‘Well, Jesus lived and died.’ No, that is not the gospel. Everyone believes that Jesus died.... Every humanistic philosophy today accepts the fact that Jesus died. But there is no good news in that. The good news is Christ died **for our sins** according to the Scriptures.... That death had great significance in the mind and heart and eyes of God. ...As Peter puts it in his words, ‘He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree,’ (1 Peter 2:24 RSV). Or, to use the words of Isaiah, ‘He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed,’ (Isaiah 53:5 KJV).”⁶





Stedman continues, “That is the good news, that God did something for us in that marvelous event of the cross.... God takes [the death of Jesus in our place] seriously, and He is prepared to treat us in an entirely different way than we deserve to be treated on the basis of the death of Jesus on our behalf. That is the good news. There on the cross, we are told, He dealt with our failures, He dealt with our rebellion, He dealt with our sinful, guilty lives. He did something about it so that besmirched and dark and stained past does not any longer need trouble us. It has been set aside by the death of Jesus, and with that fact we enter into hope and freedom.

“Of course, without that fact, life is really hope/less. This philosophy that many people have that God is a judge weighing up the good and the evil of life—and if the good outweighs the evil you get in, and if it does not you have to go to hell—is not only unbiblical but it is illogical, for how could a God of holiness and justice and purity ever accept any kind of evil at all? ...He himself is perfect, and he says to us over and over again, ‘Be ye perfect for I am perfect.’ What are we going to do with a guilty past in the light of that? The answer, of course, is the good news. In the cross of Jesus, God has already dealt with that sinful past. He offers to us freely the forgiveness of sins.”⁷

Paul sums up the good news nicely in his letter to the Ephesians: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Paul also lets us know that this free gift is for everyone who believes the gospel: “For whoever will call on the name of the LORD will be saved” (Romans 10:13).

III. CHRIST WAS BURIED

1 Corinthians 15:4a

And that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

He was buried. It is somewhat ironic that a burial or funeral is part of the good news, but it is the subsequent events that make it such good news. Christ had to be laid in the grave before He could be raised from the grave.

The Messiah’s burial was foretold hundreds of years earlier in the book of Isaiah, the prophet, who recorded that “His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth” (Isaiah 53:9).

A man crucified like Jesus would normally have been buried along with the two criminals in an unmarked grave, but in the case of Jesus there was divine intervention. The rich man Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57ff) petitioned the Roman authorities to have Jesus buried in his private tomb instead.



IV. CHRIST WAS RAISED

1 Corinthians 15:4b

And that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

“WAS RAISED” (*egeiro*) “means to cause to return to life. This idea comes from the fact that the ancients closely associated death with sleep. Paul uses the *perfect tense* which emphasizes that Christ arose at a point in history and continues in His risen state. The *passive voice* indicates in this verse that Christ did not raise Himself but was raised by God.... John S. Whale wrote that ‘The Gospels do not explain the Resurrection; the Resurrection explains the Gospels. Belief in the Resurrection is not an appendage to the Christian faith; it *is* the Christian faith.’⁸ W. E. Vine notes that “By the death and burial of His body He came down to our condition; by His Resurrection He raised us to His position.”⁹

“So the other disciple [John] who had first come to the tomb entered then also, and he saw (*perceived*—he perceived the significance of the clothes without a body!) and believed. For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead’ (John 20:8-9). John was the first to understand the truth of the resurrection and as a result to believe. [He] perceived that the missing body and the position of the grave clothes was not due to a robbery. He realized that Jesus had risen from the dead and had gone through the grave clothes. The tomb was open not to let Jesus’ body out but to let the disciples and the world see that He rose.”¹⁰

Death could not hold Him. Satan would not defeat Him.

V. CHRIST APPEARED

1 Corinthians 15:5-11

And that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; ⁷then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; ⁸and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. ¹¹Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Many of Jesus’ followers witnessed His resurrected body. More than 500 people saw the risen Lord. Jesus had conquered death. Because He lived, they could live, also. The same is true for us today.

“The reality of this was verified by the Scriptures (e.g., Ps. 16:10; Isa. 53:8–10) and by historical evidence verified by time in the grave and out of it, in the presence of the living. The fact that He was buried verified His death, and the fact that He appeared to others verified His resurrection.”¹¹





CONCLUSION

In his book *A Gospel Primer for Christians*, Milton Vincent offers some lucid thoughts on what the gospel, the death of Christ for my sins and His resurrection, means for those of us who believe in Him for eternal life today:

As a Christian, “The gospel is not simply the story of ‘Christ and Him crucified’ (1 Corinthians 2:2); it is also the story of my own crucifixion. The Bible tells me that I, too, was crucified on Christ’s cross (Galatians 2:20). My old self was slain there, and my love affair with the world was crucified there too.... When my flesh yearns for some prohibited thing, I must die. When called to do something I don’t want to do, I must die. When I wish to be selfish and serve no one, I must die. When shattered by hardships that I despise, I must die. When wanting to cling to wrongs done against me, I must die. When enticed by allurements of the world, I must die. When wishing to keep besetting sins secret, I must die. When wants that are borderline needs are left unmet, I must die. When dreams that are good seem shoved aside, I must die.”¹²

“Thankfully, the gospel teaches me that dying is not an end, but a beginning. For after Christ took up His cross and died, God raised Him from the dead (Ephesians 1:20), exalted Him to the highest heaven (Philippians 2:8-9), and drew Him into His bosom (John 1:18). These will not leave me for dead, but will raise me similarly, if I would only allow myself to die. Indeed, on the other side of each layer of dying lie experiences of a life with God that are far richer, far higher, and far more intimate than anything I would have otherwise known (Romans 6:4). In God’s economy, death is the way to life. ‘Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it,’ Jesus says, ‘but whoever loses His life for my sake, he shall find it’ (Luke 9:24). Indeed, the more conformable I am made to the death of Christ, the more I experience freedom from sin and taste the power of the resurrection of Jesus Himself.”¹³

Let this Easter be a reminder that, for those who trust in Christ and His finished work on the cross for them, there is the promise of eternal life and freedom from sin here and now through the very same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. We can truly live because He lives!

Pastor Arin Hess



FOOTNOTES

1. Peter Marshall, *The First Easter*, Chosen Books, 1959, pg. 121.
2. All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, 1995 Update.
3. Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, Second Edition, Vol. 1, United Bible Societies, 1996, pg. 412.
4. *Ibid.*, pg. 241.
5. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Broadman Press, 1933.
6. Ray C. Stedman, "Of First Importance," *Authentic Christianity*, Feb. 5, 1979, www.raystedman.org.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Bruce Hurt, "1 Corinthians 15:3-5 Commentary," *Precept Austin*, April 23, 2021, www.preceptaustin.org/1corinthians_153-5/
9. W. E. Vine, *The Collected Writings of W. E. Vine*, Thomas Nelson, 1996, quoted in Hurt, "1 Corinthians," *Precept Austin*.
10. David K. Lowery in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, Victor Books, 1985, pg. 542.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Milton Vincent, *A Gospel Primer for Christians*, Focus Publishing, 2008, pgs. 39-41.
13. *Ibid.*, pgs. 41-42.

The picture of the tomb on the front comes from <https://blog.logos.com/the-empty-tomb-of-jesus-see-what-it-would-have-looked-like/>.

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www.CapitolStudies.org
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Capitol Studies Offices
4547 Calvert Street • Lincoln, NE 68506

