



eLesson 028

Text: John 6:28-29

Subject: Easter

Why Easter?

Slipping into the shadows. In many parts of the world, it seems that Easter is slipping into the shadows of our consciousness. Many do not bother to celebrate it or do not really know the whole story of what they do celebrate. A recent movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, brought the events leading up to Easter to the forefront of our individual and collective consciousness. But what about what happened after that? What happened on that first Easter morning ... and what does that mean to each of us? We need to refocus and ask, *Why Easter?*

The grim reality. I have been to more funerals than I would like to attend ... and stood at more open gravesites than I would like to visit. There is a grim and unavoidable reality in those settings. The sting of death can be seen and felt as we first walk to the casket's side. The person viewed there is no longer vibrant, warm, and responsive ... but is seen reduced to a cold, motionless shell. The reality of death and the sense of our separation rushes in as the body is lowered in the casket, the lid closed for the last time, the box lowered into the ground, and dirt shoveled in. Life seems to be swallowed up in death ... producing a crisis of emotion for many who observe these final rituals. Hopelessness can overwhelm the one who does not understand. That was the scene almost 2,000 years ago when Jesus was crucified. His family, disciples, and friends faced a crisis as His life seemed swallowed up in death. Jesus died a brutal death at the hands of His executioners. After several hours, His torn and lifeless body was taken down from the cross. Then they buried Him in a cold, dark tomb.

The one most important question. How could Paul write, "*O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ,*" 1 Corinthians 15:55-57? The answer to that question is easy ... *It is because of that first Easter morning.* The life of Jesus was swallowed up in death as He died to pay the price for our sins. However, on that Easter morning, the third day after His death, He came back to life having conquered death. He appeared to His family, disciples, and many others ... proving that He was as He said, both God and Savior. Those who saw His death and burial, those who touched His lifeless body as they took it down from the cross, those who carried it into the tomb ... saw Him alive again. They saw Him ... heard Him speak and teach again ... touched His scars ... walked with Him ... and even ate with Him. His resurrection that morning took the mystery and sting of death away. If you were there, what *Easter Question* would you have asked of Him? Many questions of curiosity could be asked ... Was it painful? ... Was there a bright light? ... Was it cold?

However, the most important question should be the one asked of Jesus earlier, *"What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?"* John 6:28. This eLesson answers that question ... and asks the most important question that each of us must answer in our lives. Your answer determines your eternal destiny. First, I will ask five other questions ... and answer those for you. Then, I will ask the one question that only you can answer. That one question is about your relationship with Jesus. Your relationship with Jesus begins with a step of faith. I want you to be completely sure that you have taken that step. Death does not have to be victorious ... that is the answer to *Why Easter?* If you are already sure that you are right with God and ready to face death, you might want to email forward or give a copy of this eLesson to a friend ... so that they too can be sure.

Question #1: Why did God send Jesus to us? The answer is good news. *"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. God sent Jesus because He loves each one of us. Many people feel unloved. Where love is sought ... none is found. Some children feel unloved by their parents. Parents may feel unloved by their children. Many marriages grow cold and loveless. We need love from friends and family ... but many feel rejected and unloved. Maybe you can identify with the words of David, *"There is no one who regards me; there is no escape for me; no one cares for my soul,"* Psalms 142:4. However, you do not have to feel that way. You are loved ... God loves you. You are so loved by God that He sent Jesus to give you the most precious gift of all. That gift is eternal life. Eternal life is more than living forever. The Bible states that everyone will live forever. No one is extinguished. Then, what is eternal life? Jesus defined it in His prayer to the Father. *"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent,"* John 17:3. Eternal life is a personal relationship with God ... a relationship for all of eternity. Why did God send Jesus? God sent Him because He loves you and because He wants to give you the gift of eternal life.

Question #2: Why did Jesus come to us? Christianity is different from all other religions in the world. Other religions can be described as man seeking God. Christianity is the opposite ... it is God seeking man. Referring to Himself, Jesus said, *"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost,"* Luke 19:10. Jesus came to earth to seek and to save lost people. He came to provide the way to God. Jesus said, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me,"* John 14:6. Jesus came to provide the way for us to get to God. He is the bridge between God and man. *"For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all,"* 1 Timothy 2:5-6. Why did Jesus come to us? He came to provide the way for you and for me to get to God.

Question #3: What did Jesus do for us? All other religions are about what man must do for God. Christianity is about what God has done for man. Jesus said, *"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep,"* John 10:11. The death of Jesus on the cross is the one event that makes it possible for us to be right with God. He did it for us. His death paid for our sins. *"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness,"* 1 Peter 2:24. *"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins ... and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day,"* 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. What did Jesus do for you? He died on the cross to pay for your sins.

Question #4: Why is the cross important to you? Other religions offer no solution to the problem of sin. Sin separates imperfect man from the perfect God. *"But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God,"* Isaiah 59:2. Other religions

suggest that self-improvement is the path to salvation ... keep trying to improve and you might be saved. Can sinners improve their moral and ethical behavior? Yes ... but that does not change their record of sins. Imagine a serial murderer standing before a judge in a court of law ... asking for forgiveness because he has been killing fewer and fewer people each year. Such a defense would not work in a courtroom. Moreover, it will not work with God. A sinner needs the record of his or her sins to be purged. Justice must be met. It is not enough simply to improve your behavior. Improving your behavior does only one thing for your record of sins ... it makes it get worse more slowly. You may not have done anything that the world would call a big sin. However, a lifelong stream of small and medium sins produces a very bad record. Just three sins a day for 50 years adds up to almost 55,000 sins. Ten sins a day for just 15 years is the same number. The perfect and just God requires payment for sins. You can pay for your own sins with spiritual death ... your eternal separation from God. *"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord,"* Romans 6:23. However, God has provided a better way. Why is the cross important to you? The cross is important because it is the place where Jesus paid for your sins. The gift of eternal life is free to you ... but Jesus paid for it with His death on the cross. However, that gift is not yours unless you do one very important thing.

Question #5: What does God want you to do? Some men asked Jesus a similar question. They asked, *"What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?"* He answered, *"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent,"* John 6:28-29. His answer is that we must believe *in* Him. Believing in Jesus is the one thing we must do to get the gift of eternal life. Believing *in* Jesus is much more than believing *about* Him. You believe about something with your mind. Believing *in* something is different ... it is an active response from your heart. Imagine standing in the open door of an airplane that has lost its engines somewhere over Europe. The plane will crash in a short time. If you stay on the plane, you will die ... a fact you cannot ignore. However, you have a chance to be saved. You have a life-saving parachute strapped to your back. You have always believed about parachutes ... but stepping out of that plane's door requires much more than mental belief. It requires an active response from the heart. You must put your faith in the parachute to be saved by the parachute. Just stepping out in faith without a parachute is not enough. No amount of faith can substitute for a missing parachute. In addition, you must have the right parachute on your back. A faulty substitute will not save you. A similar step of faith (an active response from the heart) is necessary for your spiritual salvation. You must take a step of faith by believing *in* Jesus, John 1:12, John 11:25-26, Acts 10:43. Your step of faith will allow Him to save you. Be sure that you have taken that step of faith. Are you sure? Have you believed in Jesus?

The final question: Will you put your faith in Jesus right now? That is the most important question that you will be asked in all of eternity. You may already be a religious person. You may love God, pray to Him, go to church, and give Him the gifts of your time and money. All of that is good ... but it is not enough. I remember the time before I married my wife. I loved her very, very much. I talked to her every day ... sometimes for hours at a time. I went to her house whenever I could. In addition, I gave her gifts. However, I was not married. I had not taken that step of faith. I was not married until I made my covenant with her. I had believed *about* her ... but that was not enough. On our wedding day, I took a step of faith when I said, *"I do"*. I was not married until that moment. Do you see the similarity? Loving God, talking (praying) to Him, going to His house, and giving gifts to Him are not enough. You must make your covenant with Him ... you must believe in Jesus. Is that step of faith missing in your relationship with God? You are lost for eternity unless you take the simple step of faith of believing in Jesus. Are you now ready to say, *"I do"* to Him?

Will you put your faith in Jesus? The choice is yours. No one can decide for you. Your choice determines your eternal destiny. The simple Gospel message is that if you believe in Jesus, you will become God's child, your sins will be forgiven, and you will be given the gift of eternal life. If you do not believe, you will face an eternity of separation from God. *"Those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus ... will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord,"* 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9. You are at a fork in the road of your eternity. Will you choose Jesus? Please make the right choice. Right now, take your step of faith by believing in Jesus. Say *"I do"* to the Savior. It is easy to do. Jesus has already done the difficult part. He died on the cross to pay for your sins. Your part is easy ... in a simple prayer of faith, just tell Him you believe in Him. You can be sure that Jesus is yours. True faith is an active response of the heart. Take your step of faith. Put your trust in Jesus. I invite you now to take your step of faith with this simple prayer...

Dear God

I admit that I have done wrong things ... I am a sinner.
I turn to You from my sin.
I believe in Jesus.
I believe that He, being God, died on the cross to pay for my sins.
I invite Him to be my savior.

Amen.

Note: If you said that prayer just now, you have become God's child. Today is your spiritual birthday. You are now safe forever with Him. There is now no need to fear death! Jesus said, *"Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven,"* Matthew 10:32. If you just said that prayer, will you confess Him to me by telling me? Tell me of your prayer. I will pray for you. If you have any questions, I would be glad to help. Send an e-mail to me, John Morris, at John@911GOD.org. Be sure to pass a copy of this eLesson on to others who might need to know the simple message of Easter. Another form of this eLesson is available as the main content of www.911GOD.org.

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No Study Questions or Personal Reflection Questions are included with this eLesson.

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