

Mk 16:1–6 (ESV) When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ⁽²⁾ And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ⁽³⁾ And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” ⁽⁴⁾ And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. ⁽⁵⁾ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. ⁽⁶⁾ And he said to them, *“Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here...”*

1. Today we celebrate the greatest of the Christian “holy days”

- A. I know Christmas gets all the “press” and seems to be celebrated in a greater way
 - 1). And I know Christmas is important for what it means
 - a). It reminds us of God coming to earth to be clothed in humanity
 - b). Of the Savior coming to earth to absorb the wrath of God aimed at our sin
 - c). There in Jerusalem is the beginning of an earthly mission to make lost man right with God
- B. But without Easter none of that means anything
 - 1). If He didn’t rise on that Easter morning – His mission failed
 - a). His sacrifice wasn’t sufficient to forgive our sins – The Father didn’t accept it
 - 2). Death conquered Him – therefore it will conquer us too
- C. If He didn’t rise from the dead – Christmas is just a reminder of failure
 - 1). A baby who grew up into another man that promised things He couldn’t fulfill
 - 2). Without Easter and the resurrection Christianity comes apart at the seams

John R. W. Stott: Christianity is in its very essence a resurrection religion. The concept of resurrection lies at its heart. If you remove it, Christianity is destroyed.

Transition: The good news is that Jesus has risen *therefore Christianity is alive and well*

- A. I want to show you what that means – If the resurrection is true – if Christianity is validated
 - 1). Then Easter has the answer to the most important questions men can ask

2. Outline

- A. Easter answers the question of guilt
- B. Easter answers the question of loneliness
- C. Easter answers the question of death

I. EASTER ANSWERS THE QUESTION OF GUILT

1. Scripture tells us that man’s biggest problem is sin

- A. He lives a life rebelling against God and His ways

Ro 3:23 (ESV) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

 - 1). All have broken His commands

Objection: I haven’t sinned – I haven’t broken His commands – let’s check

Mt 22:34–40 (ESV) But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ⁽³⁵⁾ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ⁽³⁶⁾ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ⁽³⁷⁾ And he said to him, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ⁽³⁸⁾ This is the great and first commandment. ⁽³⁹⁾ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁽⁴⁰⁾ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”*

- A. Have you ever loved God with all your heart, soul and mind – No!
- B. Do you live, loving your neighbor as yourself? No!

Point: So that removes any objection that we have sinned against God

2. There is a cost living outside of God’s ways

- A. Man suffers from the feelings of guilt – Why? Because he’s guilty
 - 1). God has placed a conscience within man that is wired to respond to that – bothers you

- B. You may suppress – try to silence it - but it is still doing damage
 - 1). Type “Guilt” into Google – many psychologist say it’s the biggie – leads to all the other problems
 - a). Causes sickness – anxiety – depression - suicide
- Thought:** Guilt is a monster – you’ll never really be healthy and whole until it is dealt with
- A. The question is – how do we deal with it?

Four Incorrect Ways to Deal with Guilt

1. Some just try to do better

- A. If I can get enough good stuff on one side it will balance the bad stuff and I’ll be alright
 - 1). Try to be a better parent – clean up the mouth a bit – be a better neighbor...husband, wife
- B. They hope by improving in these areas – they will feel better about themselves
 - 1). That the ache of guilt will be removed – finally they will be at peace with themselves

2. Some just try to play harder (opposite of doing better)

- A. Try to silence the screaming of a guilty conscience by ramping up the noise level
 - 1). Life becomes a non-stop party – always active – always on the move – always noisy
 - a). Silence isn’t golden – to the guilty it’s deadly – just you and your thoughts
 - b). Quick turn on the TV – listen to music on the phone – anything but silence
- B. I think this is why many turn to drugs or alcohol - deaden the pain of that emptiness
 - 1). Silence the roar of that guilty conscience

3. Some become religious

- A. They know they need to make peace with God so they start going to church
 - 1). Maybe get baptized, Give a bit to the church - or volunteer to do a few things
 - 2). They pick up their Bible now and then and even give prayer a shot
- B. Guilty man can try to appease God through religion
 - 1). But all they’ve done is become religious –
 - 2). They may have been converted to church but not to Christ
 - a). They haven’t entered into a saving relationship with Him

4. Some just try to eliminate God altogether

- A. If they can convince themselves that there is no such thing as God - then why should they feel guilty
 - 1). Who have I sinned against? Who has the authority to make up rules for me!
 - a). If I came from an animal – if there is no God – then I’m free to do as I please
Therefore why should I feel guilty?
- B. You may get rid of God in your own mind - but you can't get rid of the truth
 - 1). The Bible proclaims there is a creator
 - 2). And the Bible proclaims that His creation rather than giving evidence of the theory of evolution
Is declaring every night and every day that there is a creator
 - 3). And the Bible says that every man can see that - because God has made it plain to them
 - a). But God says man willingly suppresses that truth He has made clear to them

George Wald. Nobel Prize winner: "When it comes to the origin of life, we have only two possibilities as to how life arose. One is spontaneous generation arising to evolution; the other is a supernatural creative act of God. There is no third possibility...Spontaneous generation was scientifically disproved one hundred years ago by Louis Pasteur, Spellanzani, Reddy and others. That leads us scientifically to only one possible conclusion - that life arose as a supernatural creative act of God...I will not accept that philosophically because I do not want to believe in God. *Therefore, I choose to believe in that which I know is scientifically impossible, spontaneous generation arising to evolution.*"

- b). I'm willing to lie to myself – I'm willing to embrace something I know is impossible
Because I don't want to admit there is a creator

C. Why do they suppress that truth about a creator? Intellectual reasons. I don't think so

- 1). That wasn't the case with the genius George Wald was it?
- 2). I believe it is because of moral reasons – to accept a creator is to accept accountability to Him
- 3). If evolution will get rid of Him with a supposed scientific reason – great! I'm an evolutionist
 - a). Even though that theory is based on assumptions and filled with impossibilities
 - b). But even though it is an impossible model man clings to it without investigation
Because it gets rid of God
- 4). If they admit there is a creator – they know they're accountable to Him!
 - a). And they love their sin and independence and don't want anybody messing with that

Thought: All these answers to guilt and emptiness fail – why?

A. They don't deal with the root of the guilt problem – man is alienated from His creator because of sin

- 1). As long as sin is a problem that God given conscience will do what it is supposed to do
Making you feel that things are not right
- 2). I must add there is the possibility of you rejecting your conscience so much
 - a). That it finally becomes so hard – you no longer sense it at all – seared conscience
 - b). At that point you're lost – your eternity is sealed - sin no longer bothers you
You can no longer feel any need of God or forgiveness

Thought: Let's go back through the list and see the failures

A. It doesn't matter how much good you do from now on

- 1). You might impress man but it won't erase that guilt before God – you have broken His law
 - a). The conscience will try to wake you up – warn you – your sin must be judged

B. You can't play hard enough – long enough to get rid of the guilt and emptiness

- 1). Drink it away – you will wake up sober the next morning
Deaden it with drugs they will wear off – and the emptiness creeps back in
- 2). Crank up the noise – but silence keeps creeping in
 - a). What a brutal treadmill running from your own thoughts becomes

C. You can't become religious enough to cover your guilt

- 1). Mere religion has never saved anybody from guilt – it usually only adds to it!
 - a). One rule after another is piled on - that you can't keep in your own power
- 2). The only way you can live the Bible out is to know the one who wrote it
 - a). Meet Him and He will give you the desire and the power you need

E. Getting rid of God through various philosophies and theories won't get it done

- 1). Romans says "Man suppresses the truth about God"
 - a). Picture of holding a lid down on a boiling pot – ease up a bit – It boils over
- 2). This creation is like a boiling pot – it is constantly shouting out there is a God
There is a creator – there is intelligence behind all you see – there MUST BE a designer
- 3). We live in a God drenched creation – His fingerprints are all over it
 - a). It is hard to keep suppressing that truth – I remember
But now and then the troubling thought of God would break in
 - 1a). I would scramble to suppress it

- 4). *Do you really think you can walk in His creation and entirely rid yourselves of Him*

5. None of these can get rid of guilt – but the truth of Easter can

- A. The truth of Easter is that Christ died on the cross for your sin – then 3 days later rose again!
- B. The truth of Easter proclaims that your sin was completely paid for – every vile thing you've done
 - 1). Jesus bore the full fury of God's wrath that you deserved
 - 2). **AND GOD accepted that sacrifice – that payment of your debt**

Question: How do I know that debt was paid in full? That God accepted it? Jesus rose to be with the Father

- A. If my sin was placed into His account and He couldn't pay for it all – He doesn't rise
 - 1). He is not fit for heaven – because there is still my sin upon Him
- B. The resurrection proves there was no sin left – it was all paid for 100%
Therefore the resurrection is my receipt – Paid in full – I'm OK with God now
- C. Look what happens to our guilt

Heb 10:22 (NLT) let us go right into the presence of God, with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our **guilty consciences** have been sprinkled with **Christ's blood to make us clean...**

- 1). When we trust Christ our guilty consciences are wiped clean – no guilt left
 - a). The record of my sin and the accompanying guilt has been taken care of at the cross
 - b). The resurrection proved that happened
- 2). Now I can run into God's presence to enjoy Him!

Heb 4:16 (ESV) Let us then **with confidence draw near** to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Transition: Easter gives the answer for the guilt ridden – you can be cleansed by Christ

- A. The guilt taken away – how do I know it's taken away? He rose!

II. EASTER ANSWERS THE QUESTION OF LONELINESS

1. Loneliness is a huge problem today

- A. The hunger of loneliness is very real today – haunting many individuals
 - 1). Which is a bit strange because we all carry devices designed for communication
 - 2). But I fear they mostly isolate – look at a family at dinner – all staring into a phone
- B. It victimizes even those you would think couldn't be lonely

Anne Hathaway: Loneliness is my least favorite thing about life. The thing that I'm most worried about is just being alone without anybody to care for or someone who will care for me.

O. J. Simpson, People Magazine, 1978 before his problems in L.A.: "I sit in my house in Buffalo and sometimes I get so lonely it's unbelievable. Life has been so good to me. I've got a great wife, good kids, money, my own health and I'm lonely and bored... I often wondered why so many rich people commit suicide. Money sure isn't a cure-all!"

- 1). Extremely popular – everybody loved O.J. Simpson at that time

Thought: Those quotes are heart-breaking – but there is an answer

2. Easter tells us there is somebody who cares for us

- A. One who loves me enough He would go to the cross for me
One that the grave couldn't hold – who is alive and well – and calls us to Him

Listen to His cry: Mt 11:28 (ESV) Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Jn 7:37 (ESV) On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, **"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."**

- 1). The divine summons to come to Him and be satisfied
- B. He is the one who cries out – I want to be your shepherd – I want to take care of you

Isa 40:11 (NLT) He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart.

- C. Vance Havner said: One of the worst things about loneliness is that you can't run away from it.
- 1). No but you can run to Him! He is alive! He has conquered death!
 - a). He desires to give you abundant life – rich and satisfying
 - b). In Him loneliness is conquered

3. I love the truth that He is always with me

- A. How many times on a train in England watching those green hills roll by – nobody else around
Yet I sense Him so close – I'm worshipping and communing with Him in my heart
- B. The same thing in a mall – by myself – yet I'm not – He walks with me
- 1). I am speaking to Him as I go
- C. I love going to bed at night saying "Good night to Him"
Waking up – first thing – "Good morning Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit."
- D. My earthly father didn't want to raise me
My heavenly Father promised "I will never leave you nor forsake you"
- 1). My Savior is a friend closer than a brother
 - 2). The Holy Spirit is my constant companion

4. Let me add - this is intentional – habitual thinking about God – a choice

Psa 16:8-9 (NIV) I have set the LORD always before me. **(Look at the results)** Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. (9) Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure,

- A. David says "I have SET the Lord before me." I have chosen to live my life out like this

Point: He is the answer to loneliness – He is willing to fill your life with Him

- A. Easter tells us He has risen from the grave – Is He calling out to you now?

Transition: So Easter answers the questions about guilt and loneliness

III. EASTER ANSWERS THE QUESTION OF DEATH

1. Here is the big one - always has been

Job asked 4,000 years ago: Job 14:14 (NIV) If a man dies, will he live again? - What happens?

- A. There is this reality looming that no one escapes
- 1). Princes and paupers – those who live in Palaces and those who live on the street
 - 2). Educated and illiterate – White. Black. Red. Yellow. Brown.
- B. The unbeliever hates the thought of death – It's scary – to many questions
- 1). Does everything just end – eternal darkness – the one that freaked me out
 - 2). Or does existence continue on – does my last breath here – just mean my first in eternity?
 - a). If it continues on – where does the grave take me?
Will there be a day of judgment? Is there really a heaven? Is there really a hell?
- C. Back to Job's question – **Job 14:14 *If a man dies, will he live again?***
- 1). Easter answers that - one did die and He did live again!
 - a). So we have our answer – it isn't eternal darkness - nothingness
 - 2). But where do we go? Where does the grave take us?
 - a). Scripture tells us that the Christ rejecter will stand before God in judgment

Re 20:11–15 (ESV) Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ⁽¹²⁾ And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ⁽¹³⁾ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one

of them, according to what they had done. ⁽¹⁴⁾ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ⁽¹⁵⁾ *And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

1a). There is everybody who has not received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord

Thought: But fortunately Easter tells us how to escape that

- A. If Christ rose from the dead – if He conquered death and ascended into glory NOT judgment
Scripture says that all who are in Him will conquer death – escape judgment and go into glory

Jn 11:25 (ESV) Jesus said ... "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, *though he die, yet shall he live,*

2 Cor 4:14 (NLT) We know that the same God who raised our Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus...

2. Then for the Christian there is no fear of death

- A. Easter tells us that death didn't have the final say in Christ's life – it was simply the door into glory
1). It promises us that it will not have the final say in ours – it's sting is gone – it is now a servant
Alexander Maclaren: The grave has a door on its inner side.

- B. Easter tells us that our Savior has stood toe-to-toe with death and won
He rose and has gone before every believer to prepare a place for us

John 14:1-3 (NIV) "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God ; trust also in me. (2) In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. *I am going there to prepare a place for you. (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*

- 1). For the Christian death is simply the servant to take us into what He has prepared
Into a place that makes the greatest place on earth seem like a slum

D.L. Moody: This is my coronation day. I have been looking forward to it for years.

3. Job asked "If a man dies, will he live again?"

- A. Can death really be it? You live 50-60-70-80 years and that's all - you die and just darkness forever!
B. Easter answers that "Man does live again" - the grave isn't it!

THE CALL

1. If that is true – if death doesn't end anything.

- A. If it does take you into one of two places – into eternal judgment or eternal joy
1). I would be remiss if I didn't ask – are you ready? Are you sure where it will take you?

2. Scripture is clear – there is only one way to escape judgment

Jn 14:6 (ESV) Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Speaking about Jesus: Ac 4:12 (ESV) And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

- A. Have you seen that you are guilty of sin?
1). We've seen everybody has sinned – you haven't loved the Lord your God and your neighbor...
B. Have you seen that the wages you earn with that sin are horrifying beyond all imagination

Ro 6:23 (ESV) For the wages of sin is death...

- 1). That is what the Bible calls the "Second death" – eternal damnation

Re 20:14–15 (ESV) Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. *This is the second death,* the lake of fire. ⁽¹⁵⁾ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

- C. But the good news is that God sent His Son to die on a cross – to pay the debt you owed for your sin

Jn 3:16 (ESV) “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, *that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

1). There is the escape – Jesus has come – He has gone to the cross for your sins
He has risen from the grave – He is in glory now – to save all who will come to Him

a). The one who conquered death whispers to your heart
Death need not be an enemy – I have defeated it – I have made a way to glory

b). *I have stood face-to-face with your greatest enemy and made it bow*

1 a). Now it has simply become a servant for all who know me

A friend to take you into glory where there will be no more tears – only joy

D. Have you prepared for that final day?

CHS: He who does not prepare for death is more than an ordinary fool. He is a madman.

1). But listen to how those who know Christ speak of death

Isaac Watts: I lie down in comfort at night, not being anxious whether I awake in this world or another.

Anon: Death is not extinguishing the light; it is putting out the lamp because the dawn has come.

2). Death stung itself to death – when it stung Christ!

a).

2). Believer's have nothing to fear any longer – glory is racing at us

We will have our own resurrection soon!

a). We will be with our God

We will put the pain, the trials, the suffering in the rear-view mirror

3. Easter tells me – because My Lord and Savior conquered death so will I

A. Because it couldn't hold Him – it can't hold me either – I WILL RISE AND I WILL BE WITH HIM