

## **The Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ: The Pivotal Point in History**

*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26).*

History is the story of God's love expressed through His Son, Jesus Christ. It is really His Story. Everything preceding His arrival looks forward to it. Each event after His resurrection reflects back on His time on earth.

**The Gregorian calendar:** The most widely used calendar in the world today marks two periods of time: before Christ – B.C. – and Anno Domini (the year of our Lord) or A.D. The division may not be exactly the occasion of Christ's birth (many scholars believe Jesus was born between 6 and 4 B.C.), but the intent is clear. The coming of Jesus Christ marked the most important event in history.

**The Bible:** The sixty-six books of the Bible are divided into two sections. The Old Testament chronicles the journeys of faithful men and women of God who looked for the Messiah. Many prophesied about that day.

The New Testament begins with the birth of Jesus, gives the story of His life, building His church, the activities of the first century church and promises His final appearance.

Of all the events in the life of Jesus that marked the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament that was fleshed out in His person in the New Testament, His resurrection is the culmination of all that had come before.

**Easter:** The resurrection of Jesus Christ marks the pivotal point in history where reconciliation between God and man became possible. His birth was miraculous. His life was pure and without sin. Jesus revealed God in the flesh. His death was the sacrifice for our sin. It was the resurrection that put the period on all that had come before. With the resurrection of Jesus, His mission was completed.

Jesus was always looking to the cross. Even when as a young boy of twelve He told His mother that He must be about His Father's business, He knew that would lead Him to the cross. *...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross...(Hebrews 12:2).*

Mary and Joseph knew the prophecies about Jesus. The angel told Joseph that he was to call the child Jesus and that He would save His people from their sins. When Simeon saw Him in the temple when He was just a few days old, he warned Mary that her heart would be pierced. Although she and Joseph may not have known all the details of the horrors that lay ahead for Jesus, they were

aware of how sin was paid for – a sacrifice. Even the wise man who brought myrrh as a gift to the Christ child knew that it was used for anointing the dead.

**The Lord's Supper:** Just before His crucifixion, Jesus took His disciples aside and had a special supper with bread and wine: the bread symbolizing His body which He was about to offer as a sacrifice and the wine representing His shed blood. Christians around the world still practice this ordinance in memory of Him.

**Lent:** Observed by many worldwide, Lent is a forty day period leading up to Easter marked by self-denial and reflection on the sacrifice Christ made.

Many who observe Lent in the West start on Ash Wednesday. Those in the East often begin their observation on Clean Monday - the Monday before Ash Wednesday. Clean Monday is a reminder for them to begin the period of Lent with good intentions and a desire to clean their spiritual house. Even non-Christians are aware of pre-Lent festivals, such as Mardi Gras – also called Fat Tuesday - as times of feasting before Lent officially arrives.

According to the early church historian Eusebius, the earliest Christians fasted and prayed for one or two days, some for forty hours continually before Easter. When Eusebius' *History of the Church* was translated from Greek into Latin, the translator put a punctuation mark between forty and hours, thus leading some people reading the document to believe that the fast was for 40-24 hour days instead of 40 hours. By 300 A.D., a 40-day celebration leading up to Easter was widespread.

Nevertheless, when Easter approaches, every Christian is reminded that Christ's virgin birth, perfect life and love for mankind led Him to the cross. The cause for celebration is the resurrection. *So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!"* (Matthew 28:8-9).

Without the first Easter – the resurrection – all of the prophecies, calendars and celebrations marking the coming of Christ would be meaningless. For it is with the resurrection that Jesus conquered the grave and defeated Satan. It is with the resurrection that He proved what He had been saying all along – that He is the Son of God. It is the resurrection that made it possible for us to live with Him eternally.

*And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!...If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead...* (1 Corinthians 15:17,19,20).

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