

God Raised Him

Celebrations! What are some of the things we celebrate? How do we celebrate? On May 8, 1945, the streets of London were packed with people celebrating the end of the war in Europe. They danced in the streets, waded in the fountains, and embraces each other. Then on August 13, 1945, the same scenes were played out on the streets of New York as the final victory of World War 2 brought about peace.

Some have been known to celebrate when their favorite team wins a victory on the playing field. The exuberant celebrations may be seen in the streets and parking lots following those victories. Some celebrations are more somber and as a married couple celebrate a milestone anniversary quietly in their home while listening to some of their favorite music and perhaps enjoying a glass of wine.

We may notice that different occasions are marked by celebrations that are as varied as the reasons we celebrate. Today, we celebrate the most pivotal and significant moment ever to occur in the entire history of Humanity. We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. Let's read about the first people to learn of this event as recorded in Matthew's gospel.

Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you." And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me." (Matthew 28:1-10 NASB)

Pause here and let the reality of the moment sink in. Just a few days earlier, Mary saw this man named Jesus whipped, stripped, treated with contempt and hatred, nailed to a Roman cross and die. She watched in awe as the sky became dark in the middle of the day and remained dark from noon until 3:00 PM. She watched as they took His lifeless body down to be placed in a tomb that belonged to someone else. She had to leave the final funeral preparations until after the Sabbath day. She returns to complete her preparations for the body of her friend this Jesus from Galilee. As she watched the events of that Friday unfold, we do not know how much Mary understood. One thing is certain. The scribes and Pharisees were scholars of the existing scriptures. Certainly, they should have been able to draw the parallels between the events of that Friday afternoon and Isaiah's prophecy written more than 700 years earlier. Consider this portion of the 53rd chapter of Isaiah.

By oppression and judgment, He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke *was due*? 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. But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting *Him* to grief; if He would

render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, my Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 53:8-11 NASB)

From all accounts, those who should have seen Jesus as the Messiah totally missed it. Mary may not have understood when Jesus told His disciples shortly after His triumphant entry into Jerusalem that He would die.

And Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (John 12:23-24 NASB)

This grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies is of course Jesus. Yet, when He came out of the ground, He bears much fruit.

Jesus has risen from the tomb and is alive. How do we celebrate? For some, it is celebrated by occupying a pew on Easter morning. For some, the celebration has become so secular that we never see or remember the risen Savior. Perhaps we have never shared this story with others. How do we share the celebration with others? Should we share this celebration with others? The answers to these questions are found in the last two verses of Matthew’s gospel.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20 NASB)

Peter listened to the words of Jesus and he shows us that this celebration of the resurrection is an integral part of making disciples. We need only read his first sermon found in Acts the 2nd chapter. We find it is still a part of his message when he takes the good news of salvation through Jesus to the first Gentiles to receive the good news as we find in Act the 10th chapter.

We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. God raised Him up on the third day. (Acts 10:39-40 NASB)

The images of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus are so woven into the fabric of Christianity that we must never forget this great day of resurrection. As Jesus met with Nicodemus, He spoke of a new birth. Here it is in John the 3rd chapter.

Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (John 3:3-5 NASB)

Jesus speaks of a new birth, a new life beginning, if you will as He tell Nicodemus of a birth that has **water and the Spirit**. Birth marks the beginning of a new life. We have children born into the family and their life is just beginning. So, it is with our new birth. We have a new life in Jesus.

Paul uses this same image in Romans the 6th chapter when he speaks of putting our old self to death and being raised to a new life.

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into

death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 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, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. (Romans 6:3-7 NASB)

In another passage, Paul writes about the deity of Jesus, the incarnate God and warns about those who use philosophy and worldly reasoning to lead us away from the truth of God's salvation. In this passage, Paul repeats the image of a death, burial, and resurrection as seen in baptism. Let's look in Colossians the 2nd chapter.

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. (Colossians 2:8-12 NASB)

Paul continues the theme of our resurrection in the 3rd chapter: **Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:1-3 NASB)**

Our celebration of Easter must always drive us to realize that on the cross, Jesus took our place and paid the debt of our sins, Jesus calls for us to emulate His death, burial, and resurrection through baptism, and that Jesus calls us to a new life where in we share in the glory of His resurrection.

Our celebration of this historic event is more than bunnies, baby chicks, and eggs. Our celebration of this event must include our own resurrection to live a new life in Jesus. We are called to remember that Jesus was glorified when **God raised Him up on the third day.**