



EASTER EXPLORED

THE WEEKEND THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

SESSION 1: THE PROPHECY OF EASTER

"ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES"

Easter was the weekend which all of history had been leading up to. The death and resurrection of Christ were spoken of throughout the Old Testament and by Jesus Himself.

Picture Previews:

- **Genesis 3:15** - when Adam and Eve sinned, God revealed that a Saviour would one day be wounded whilst defeating the Serpent. It was a picture of Christ crushing Satan at Calvary and consigning him ultimately to eternal defeat.
- **Genesis 22:1-14** - Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son, Isaac, upon an altar on the mountains of Moriah. It was a picture of God giving His only Son as a sacrifice for our sins upon the cross at Calvary (which is the same area as Moriah).
- **Exodus 12:1-13** - the Israelites were instructed to take the blood of a spotless, slain lamb and apply it to the door of their homes in order to escape judgement and enjoy freedom from slavery. It was a picture of Christ, the Lamb of God, shedding His blood upon the cross, so that when, by faith, we apply the value of that sacrifice to our own lives, we can escape God's judgement and enjoy freedom from sin and its consequences.

Prophetic Promises:

- **Events leading up to the death of Christ are prophesied** - He would be despised and rejected by men (Isaiah 53:3). He would be betrayed by a close friend (Psalm 41:9) for 30 pieces of silver (Zech 11:12). He would remain silent during His trial (Isaiah 53:7) and would be abused by soldiers (Isaiah 50:6) and scourged (Ps 129:3).
- **Events surrounding the death of Christ are prophesied** - He would be crucified (Zech 12:10) alongside criminals (Isaiah 53:12). He would be mocked by the crowd (Psalm 22:7-8), whilst soldiers gambled for His clothes (Ps 22:17-18). He would say - "My God, My God why have You forsaken Me?" (Ps 22:1)
- **Events surrounding the burial and resurrection of Christ are prophesied** - He would be buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9), but God would not allow His body to decay in the tomb (Ps 16:10).

Personal Predictions:

- Christ Himself predicted, on several occasions, that He would suffer, die and rise again. His followers never quite seemed to grasp it though. (Matt 16:21, Matt 17:22-23, Matt 20:17-19).

SESSION 1: QUESTIONS

1. What do you think Easter means to people nowadays?

2. How would you respond to someone who says that the Old Testament is irrelevant to us today?

3. Do you think more people would believe the Bible if they knew about all of the pictures and prophecies of the Old Testament which were fulfilled hundreds of years later?

4. Why is it so significant that the events of Easter weekend were predicted hundreds of years before they took place?

5. The fulfilment of prophecy shows us that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and is therefore well worth reading - how easy or difficult do you find reading the Bible?

SESSION 2: THE AGONY OF EASTER

“CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS”

The death of Christ was not an unexpected tragedy. It was the climax of God's plan to rescue sinners and reconcile them to Himself.

The Storyline:

- A number of key events took place in the week prior to the crucifixion.
- **Sunday:** Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey. Crowds gathered to welcome Him (Matt 21:6-9).
- **Monday:** Jesus entered the Temple and drove out the money-changers (Matt 21:12-13).
- **Tuesday:** religious leaders conspired to kill Jesus (Matt 21:23) who spoke out against their hypocrisy (Matt 23).
- **Wednesday:** it is likely Jesus spent time in Bethany with His friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus.
- **Thursday:** the disciples met with Jesus for the 'Last Supper'. He welcomed them by humbly washing their feet (John 13:4-5). They celebrated the Passover together (Luke 22:14-18). Jesus took bread and wine and established the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19-20). They went to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus prayed (Luke 22:39-46). Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. Jesus was then arrested (Luke 22:47-53). All the disciples abandoned Him (Mark 14:50). He was put through an unlawful trial by the Jewish Council

(Luke 22:54, 66-71). Peter denied Christ three times (Luke 22:55-62).

- **Friday:** Judas hung himself (Matt 27:3-10). Pilate gave the people a choice between Barabbas or Christ, and then sentenced Jesus to death by crucifixion (Matt 27:15-26). The soldiers scourged and assaulted Him, (Matt 27:27-31), before leading Him to Calvary where they crucified Him (Luke 23:33).

The Sufferings:

- Crucifixion was one of the most painful forms of death ever invented.
- From 12-3pm supernatural darkness fell across the land (Mark 15:33). During these hours the judgement for our sins fell upon Him (Isaiah 53:5-6, 1 Peter 2:24).
- Later in the evening Joseph and Nicodemus took the body down from the cross and laid it in a tomb, not far from Calvary (John 19:38-42).

The Significance:

- As a result of Jesus' sacrifice for sins on the cross, God is able to forgive us on a righteous basis, meaning we can be reconciled to Him, spared judgement and admitted to Heaven. (1 Peter 3:18)
- Salvation is now offered to us as a gift from God, paid for by Christ on the cross (Eph 2:8-9).

SESSION 2: QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think so much detail is given in the Gospels about the events of Easter week, compared to other periods of Jesus' life?

2. Read and discuss the significance of these 3 statements Jesus made whilst on the cross:

Luke 23:34

Mark 15:34

John 19:30

3. In what way does the cross show us God's holiness and at the same time God's love?

4. Read 1 Peter 3:18. What does this verse tell us about the purpose of the cross?

5. On Good Friday, Pilate asked himself the question, "What shall I do with Jesus Christ?" - why is this the most important question every one of us must answer in life? What are our possible responses?

SESSION 3: THE VICTORY OF EASTER

"HE ROSE AGAIN THE THIRD DAY"

The resurrection is one of the fundamental facts of the Gospel which a person must believe in order to be saved (Rom 10:9). If Jesus did not rise from the dead, the Christian faith is empty (1 Cor 15:14-19).

The Purpose:

- **It verified Jesus' claims to be the Son of God** (Rom 1:4) Jesus Himself predicted that He would rise from the dead (Matt 16:21, Matt 17:22-23, Matt 20:17-19). He claimed to have power to lay down His life, and to take it up again (John 10:18).
- **It confirmed that God was satisfied with the payment Christ made for sin on the cross.** It assures us that we can rely on Christ's work on the cross as the basis of our salvation. "God raised Him from the dead" (Acts 13:30).
- **It guarantees that those who believe in Christ will be raised to life again someday.** Jesus is the "firstfruits of all them that sleep" - further resurrections will occur in the future as a result of His (1 Cor 15:20).
- **It assures us that there is a day of judgement ahead for this world.** God has appointed Christ as the one who will judge the world and proved this to everyone by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:31)

The Proof:

- **The Tomb was empty** - On the third day, visitors to the tomb found the stone rolled away and the grave-clothes folded neatly where the body had lain (John 20:1-7).
- **The Testimony of eye witnesses** - Jesus appeared to over 500 people (1 Cor 15:6) during the 40 days after His resurrection (Acts 1:3). When Paul wrote about these things years later, most of these eyewitnesses were still alive and their accounts could be scrutinised.
- **The Transformation of the disciples** - When Jesus was arrested His terrified followers abandoned Him (Mark 14:50). However, a few weeks later they were willing to risk their lives whilst fearlessly preaching about Jesus in the city where He was crucified (Acts 2:14) Why? They had seen Jesus risen from the dead!

The Power:

- Christ is a living Saviour with whom we can enjoy a daily relationship.
- He has defeated death and removed the fear of death for those who believe in Him.
- The same power that raised Jesus from the dead allows us to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4). "Because He lives, I can face tomorrow. Because He lives, all fear is gone."

SESSION 3: QUESTIONS

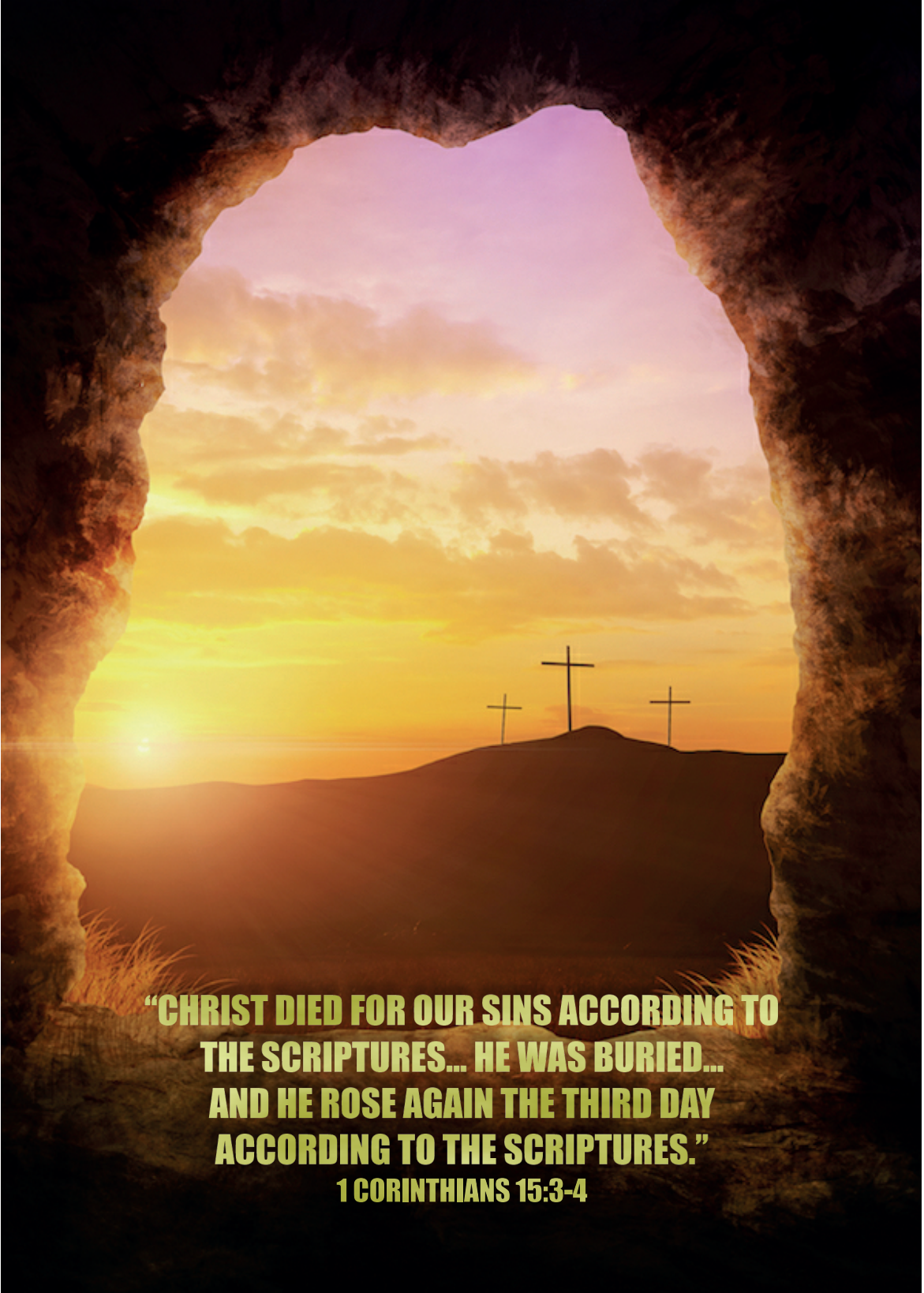
1. Why do you think critics of Christianity go to so much effort to try to disprove the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

2. Which piece of evidence do you find most compelling as proof of the resurrection - the empty tomb, the eye-witness testimonies, or the transformed lives of the disciples?

3. What difference should the resurrection of Jesus make to us day by day?

4. The events of Easter weekend (and the ascension and Pentecost which shortly followed) were the last 'big days' marked into God's calendar. What is the next 'big day' marked into God's timetable and what will happen then?

5. Having explored Easter over these three sessions, which part of it do you think people fail to understand the most?

The image is a composite graphic. It features a dark, textured cave opening in the foreground, framing a bright, hazy landscape. In the distance, three crosses are silhouetted against a glowing sky at sunrise or sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong lens flare and illuminating the clouds with warm orange and yellow light. The overall mood is solemn and hopeful.

**“CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS ACCORDING TO
THE SCRIPTURES... HE WAS BURIED...
AND HE ROSE AGAIN THE THIRD DAY
ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES.”**

1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-4