

# Matthew Chapter 27 v 57 to Chapter 28 v 10 The Real Meaning of Easter

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[ 0 : 00 ] Easter really mean. We saw those letters of the word Easter made up to talk about eggs or talk about time of school. So we're going to use the letters of the word Easter again, but this time to help us to know what Easter really means. So first of all, of course, we've got the letter E.

E, the first letter of the word Easter. So what does E stand for? Extraordinary love. Okay? Extraordinary love. This is what Jesus said. Greater love has no one than this. He's talking to his disciples, talking to them the night before he died, and talking to them about his own death.

Greater love has no one than this. The greatest love in the world that has ever been seen is the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. The love that brought him from heaven, his home because he is God, into this world. The love that took him into the cross willingly and gladly to suffer and die for us.

The greatest love we've ever known. And the great need for each one of us is to be loved. We all want to be loved and know that we're loved. But the wonderful thing is that we are loved of God.

loved of God. Even if we ignore God and have no time for God, he has proven and demonstrated his love for us in sending his son into the world. The greatest love of all. But why did Jesus come?

[ 1 : 31 ] Why did Jesus come to die on the cross? Why did that, why did he need to do anything? Well, he needed to come to rescue us, to save us. And to find that out, we go to A. So E is for extraordinary love.

A is for awful wickedness. Awful wickedness. When Jesus went to the cross and suffered and died, an awful wicked thing was done. The innocent and perfect son of God was crucified. The person who never done anything wrong in his life, the only innocent person who ever lived, died and was crucified by the soldiers because the religious leaders were jealous of him. But the real wickedness Easter is not just that Jesus died, but that Jesus died for our sin, our wickedness. Because of our wicked words, our thoughts, our actions towards one another. But especially, of course, our actions and sins against God. The God who loved us, the God who made us, the God who gives us life, the God who gives us this world to enjoy. But how have we acted towards that God? We've acted wickedly towards him.

We've rejected him as the king and God of our lives. We've ignored him as much as we can. We've set ourselves up in opposition to him, making our own rules for how we live, breaking his commandments and laws. We've done everything to separate ourselves from God. And that's just where we are. We've made ourselves God's enemies and made God our enemy. When Jesus died on the cross, he died bearing our sin. He experienced the punishment that our sin deserves. We believe in justice. We believe that people who break the law should be rightly judged and punished. What about us? If we have broken God's law again and again in the way we've spoken and acted and thought towards others and towards him, shouldn't we also be punished? Shouldn't we also give an account? Shouldn't we also be judged? Yes, we must be. But God, in his mercy and love, placed that judgment and punishment upon his Son, upon the Lord Jesus Christ. He died and suffered.

It wasn't the physical suffering which was the awful thing about the cross. What was even more awful was that there on the cross, Jesus was treated by his Father as a sinner, counted as a sinner, punished as a sinner. But he'd never done anything wrong. As our substitute, he died there. In our place, he died there. For our sake, he suffered there. So, E is for extraordinary love and A is for awful wickedness. What about S? Well, S is this, surprising forgiveness. You would think that a God who has been so wrongly treated by us, who has been so rejected, ignored and abused by us, would actually hate us and have nothing to do with us. But in the cross of Jesus, we find surprising forgiveness.

Here's the words of Jesus himself as he's being nailed to the cross. Father, forgive them. Who? Those soldiers who are driving those nails into his wrists. Those religious leaders whose jealousy and envy had led to his death and called for his death. Instead of cursing them, instead of shouting angry words at them, what does he do? He prays for them. You see, Jesus Christ was not just somebody who said good things. He was a man who lived what he said. He preached, forgive your enemies.

[ 5 : 15 ] Forgive one another. And then he went to the cross and did it. Jesus died that we might be forgiven by God. Be friends again with God. Be right again with God.

Know God and experience and enjoy God. Because one of the terrible things that our sin has done, just as it breaks our relationships with one another, it breaks our relationship with God. That's why many people don't believe in God. That's why many people never think about God and think that he's just somebody distant or mythological or unimportant. It's because the line has been broken. The relationship's been broken by our sin, by our selfishness, our pride and our greed.

But Jesus came to bring forgiveness and died to bring forgiveness so that whatever we've done, whatever our past, no matter how rotten we've acted and behaved, Jesus died for us to be forgiven and know forgiveness and experience forgiveness from God. And that's a surprising thing.

It should surprise us. Perhaps you always thought of God just as somebody who is angry or full of wrath. Well, God is also this marvelous God who is a God of love, who though he punishes sin, he punishes it in his son, that forgiveness may be known by us. On the day when Jesus died, there were two men who were crucified next to him.

The children knew that. Two robbers, armed robbers, people who were violent robbers. They were crucified because of their crimes. One of them turned to Jesus and put his faith and trust in him. And even as he died, was assured by Jesus that he would be in paradise, that his sins were forgiven, that he would be with God.

[ 6 : 58 ] Whatever we've done, no matter how bad we are, we can know forgiveness with God. In fact, one of the real problems we have is, of course, that most of us don't think we're bad enough. We think we're quite good as we are. We don't need forgiveness from God.

We're okay. We're hoping that if there is a God and there is a heaven, we'll scrape through because we've been religious or because we've tried to be a good person or because we've given to charity or whatever it may be.

But there is only forgiveness with God through the cross of Jesus. And that's surprising. And so we've seen that Easter really means extraordinarily love, the love of God that Christ came into the world and died for us. The awful wickedness of our sin, which he suffered and bore in our place.

And surprising forgiveness that he gives, even when he's on the cross and still gives today. And so we come to T. T is for terrific power. Terrific power. On the third day, he displayed his terrific power by rising from the dead.

Who's that, boys and girls? Do you know? Who is he? Mr. Strong. And he's very strong, but he's not as strong as Jesus. Because Jesus was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead.

[ 8 : 15 ] There's the proof. The proof that this Jesus of Nazareth, who died on a cross 2,000 years ago, really is God who came into the world. There's the proof. He rose from the dead. After he died, they put him in that tomb. Remember we read about it, that cave that was cut into the rock and a stone placed in front of it. A guard of soldiers were put outside it to make sure nobody stole the body.

Remember how the religious leaders were worried that somebody would say, oh, the disciples have taken it and now they say he's alive. But they didn't take the body. Nobody took the body. Nobody came to take it away because Jesus was raised to life again.

And for 40 days, he was seen, he was spoken to, he had meals with hundreds of people, hundreds of witnesses. Do you want evidence that Jesus Christ is God?

Then just look at the evidence. Just look at the proof. Just look at the fact that 500 eyewitnesses saw him at one time and many others over that time. He is alive. That's why he's God.

Because death couldn't hold him. We must die and will die. But Christ died and rose again. And the reason he rose again was not only to prove that he is God, to prove that he's somebody we can put our faith in, but he did something by his resurrection.

[ 9 : 40 ] And so we come to E again. We've had extraordinary love and awful wickedness, surprising forgiveness and terrific power. But we've seen the last E is for eternal life.

Eternal life. The reality is that all of us must die. The youngest of us to the oldest of us. Some of us, perhaps even in a matter of months or just a year or two, we may well be dead.

That's a very morbid thing, you think. But it's a reality. We all have to face it. We all have to realize that from the moment we're born, we begin to die. Even if we eat healthily.

Even if we don't drink and smoke. Even if we do all the right exercises. We may just about make 100, perhaps. But then what? We still die all the same.

And if we're still God's enemies when we die. If we still haven't sorted out the problem of our sin against him and our law breaking against him. Then we must stand before him as our judge. To judge us how we've lived this life.

[ 10 : 43 ] Not just us, but every person. Even those who've escaped justice in this world. Even those who seem to get away with murder and other things. Must all stand before God on that day of judgment.

And so will you and so will I. And we will all, because of the way we've lived, be found guilty. All of us. There's not one of us here who can say, I've never sinned.

I've never taken God's name in vain. I've never lied. I've never taken anything that wasn't mine. All of us have. And more besides. In our minds and our thoughts. We've been adulterous or we've been hateful.

Jesus says those things are sins too. And if we haven't sorted out that problem of sin. Then the Bible is very, very clear. There is eternal hell for us.

Eternal punishment for us. Eternal separation from God. But, wonderfully, Jesus came and rose again to make a difference. As he stood beside the grave of Lazarus, his friend who had died, he said, I'm the resurrection and the life.

[ 11 : 45 ] He who believes in me will live. Even though he dies. Whoever believes in me will never die. And to prove the point that his words were not just empty words. He went and stood at the grave of Lazarus.

And raised him to life after being dead for four days. More proof if we needed it. More evidence. Jesus gives eternal life. That's why he rose again.

To show us that death is not the end. For the Christian, for those who put their faith in him, it's the beginning of life. But for those who don't, it's the beginning of the worst of death.

All who believe in Jesus. All who put their faith in him. Who will entrust themselves to his power. They are the ones who he will give eternal life. And that leads us to the last letter of the word Easter.

We've seen that there's the extraordinary love of God to us in Christ's coming and dying. We've seen that there's the awful wickedness of our own sin. And who of us can really say that our consciences don't prick us.

[ 12 : 48 ] That our consciences don't say to us, well what about that? What about that word that you said to somebody the other day? What about that thing that you did in the past? What about the way you behaved? We all know they're there.

The conscience is there. We can't shut it up even if we want to. We try to. But then we realize there is surprising forgiveness. To take away the guilt of our conscience and our shame.

To bring forgiveness and a right relationship with God. And then there's terrific power. The power of the Son of God. To give eternal life to us. Life that's stronger than death.

Life that doesn't just begin at death. But life that begins now. Jesus said elsewhere. I have come that they might have life. And have it in abundance. In fullness. Living the life that we're meant to live.

Is in relationship with God. But R is for this. R-S-V-P. R-S-V-P. It's French. *Repondez-ci-vous-ple.*

[ 13 : 47 ] *Repondez-ci-vous-ple.* You might see it if you get an invitation to a party. At the bottom it will say R-S-V-P. It's an invitation that's put out. To you. If you want to come and join in.

And enjoy the party as it were. But you've got to do something. R-S-V-P says you've got to reply. You've got to respond. If you don't send a reply back to the wedding. Or to the party.

Then it's no good turning up. Because nobody will be prepared for you. You didn't reply. And so it is when we stand before God. On that day of judgment. If we have not responded to the Lord Jesus Christ as we should.

If we just put aside the invitation. If we just put aside the truth of who Jesus is. His call to us. To come and put our faith in him. Then there shall not be an entrance into the party which is heaven.

No entrance into the wedding of Christ to his bride. We've rejected the invitation if we haven't responded to it. We might as well have thrown it in the bin if we've just left it to one side.

[ 14 : 48 ] We've just said I don't want to come. I don't want to be forgiven. I don't want to be in heaven. I don't want to have life. So will you respond?

Here's what we've got to do. Here's again part of the Bible that tells us what we've got to do. If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord. And believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead.

You will be saved. You will be rescued. You will be forgiven. You will have life. We've got to respond to God. Not to me. Not to somebody else. But to God.

We've got to say Jesus you are the son of God who came into the world and died for me. And I'm putting my trust in you as the living saviour to save me.

To forgive me. We don't earn this. Jesus doesn't say you can be forgiven if you do all these things. Say these prayers. Read these books. Come to church every Sunday.

[ 15 : 42 ] It's about faith. It's about something that Christ has done for us and paid for us. And we just receive it and say thank you for it.

Have you done that boys and girls? Have you done that mums and dads? Have you done that grandparents and aunties? Have you put your faith in Jesus Christ? Have you owned him as your Lord and your King?

Have you thanked him for dying on the cross for you? Have you done that mums and aunties? Have you done that mums and aunties? Is it just the eggs as usual? Family get together? A bit of time off?

Or will it be for you? Fullness of life and newness of life. Well we're going to sing our final hymn together. And then please do stay for refreshments.

Can I just say that around and about you'll see lots of these booklets. Why the cross?

[ 16 : 40 ] They're not very many pages. Around about 30 pages, 40 pages to read. Please if you think what is this all about? I don't really understand what Easter is about.

I want to know more. I want to understand it really. I want to look at the facts and the evidence. Please take one. They're free. We'd love you to take one and read it and think about it and respond to it.

And if anything that's been said this morning has touched you, if you think there's something more to this Christianity that you've not thought of before, please speak to the person who's come with you to church.

To me if you want to. Or to somebody else who's a Christian. Well let's stand and sing our final hymn together. Again, a wonderful Easter hymn. It's number 266.

Christ is risen, hallelujah.

[ 17 : 49 ] Christ is risen, hallelujah.

Christ is risen, hallelujah. He is the one victorious end. Sing his praises, hallelujah.

Christ is risen, hallelujah. Amen. Amen. Oh Lord our God, we thank you again for the good news that Jesus is alive, risen from the dead, and the effect and power that that has upon our lives.

Oh Lord, give us that saving faith, that trust, that belief in you, that we may enter into and enjoy the fullness of Easter, and all that it means, your death and life.

And Lord grant us again that we may rejoice in you, and know you as our Lord and King, throughout this day and in all the days to come. For we ask it in your name, Lord Jesus.

[ 19 : 16 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.