

Why Easter Prophecies Matter
Lesson 04 of the series: "It is finished!"

1. On Easter Sunday morning Jesus' followers realized that he had prophesied his own death and resurrection numerous times.

"But very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. They found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. So they went in, but they didn't find the body of the Lord Jesus. As they stood there puzzled, two men suddenly appeared to them, clothed in dazzling robes. The women were terrified and bowed with their faces to the ground. Then the men asked, "Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive? He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Remember what he told you back in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and that he would rise again on the third day." Then they remembered that he had said this."

Luke 24:1-8 (NLT)

"Jesus said, 'Listen, we're going up to Jerusalem, where all the predictions of the prophets concerning the Son of Man will come true. He will be handed over to the Romans, and he will be mocked, treated shamefully, and spit upon. They will flog him with a whip and kill him, but on the third day he will rise again.' But they didn't understand any of this." Luke 18:31-34 (NLT) (see also: Matthew 12:38-40; Mark 9:31,10:33; Luke 9:22,44, and John 2:18-22)

Why it matters: God loves us and has had a plan to rescue us from sin and death since before time began.

"God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus. And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News." 2 Timothy 1:9-10 (NLT)

2. On Easter Sunday afternoon Jesus explained to some of his followers how numerous Old Testament writings had clearly predicted his death and resurrection.

"That same day two of Jesus' followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. But God kept them from recognizing him. He asked them, 'What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?' ... 'The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth,' they said. 'He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago. Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said.' Then Jesus said to them, 'You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?' Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Luke 24:13-27 (NLT)

- "He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth." Isaiah 53:7 (NLT)
- "They have pierced my hands and feet." Psalm 22:16 (NLT)
- "They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." Psalm 22:18 (NIV)
- "... (The LORD) protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken." Psalm 34:20 (NIV)
- "... he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave." Isaiah 53:9 (NLT)
- "... you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay." Psalm 16:9-11 (NIV)

Why it matters: We can trust God to keep His promises.

- "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? For sin is the sting that results in death... But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ."
1 Corinthians 15:55-57 (NLT)
- "When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn't grow into a plant unless it dies first. And what you put in the ground is not the plant that will grow, but only a bare seed of wheat or whatever you are

planting... It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever.” 1 Corinthians 15:36-37,42 (NLT)

- “I am going to prepare a place for you... When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.” John 14:2-3 (NLT)

3. On Easter Sunday evening Jesus asked his disciples to believe that he had really risen from the dead just as the Scriptures had said.

Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. ‘Peace be with you,’ he said. But the whole group was startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost! ‘Why are you frightened?’ he asked. ‘Why are your hearts filled with doubt? Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it’s really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don’t have bodies, as you see that I do.’ As he spoke, he showed them his hands and his feet. Still they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, ‘Do you have anything here to eat?’ They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he ate it as they watched. Then he said, ‘When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. And he said, ‘Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: ‘There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.’ You are witnesses of all these things. And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven.” Luke 24:35-49 (NLT)

Why it matters: We have Good News all nations need to hear.

- There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent. “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord...” Acts 3:19 (NIV)
- The same power that raised Christ from the dead is available to all who believe. “I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms.” Ephesians 1:19-20 (NLT)

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Discussion Questions

1. Looking back at your notes from this week’s lesson discussing “Why Easter Prophecies Matter” was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged or confused you?
2. Read Romans 10:9-10 & 1 Corinthians 15:17-20. Why do Christians put so much emphasis on the story of Jesus’ resurrection? Why does it matter whether or not we believe Jesus rose from the dead? When did you first believe? Why?
3. Read Matthew 12:39-40, Mark 9:31-32, Luke 24:1-8, John 2:18-22? Why didn’t even Jesus’ disciples believe Him when he foretold his crucifixion and resurrection? Why do many people still refuse to believe Jesus literally rose from the dead?
4. How is your family celebrating Christ’s resurrection this year?
5. Read Luke 24:31-49. How would you have reacted if you had been with the disciples when Jesus appeared among them on Easter Sunday evening? What would have convinced you that he was not a ghost or hallucination? Now read John 20:24-31. What convinced Thomas? Why is the story of doubting Thomas in the Bible? What can we learn from his post resurrection encounter with Jesus?
6. Read Luke 24:13-33. Why did Jesus keep the two men walking to Emmaus from recognizing him? Why did he bother asking them their opinions? How would it make you feel to know that you were speaking to Jesus without realizing it? (see Hebrews 13:2) What can we learn from their encounter with Jesus?
7. Discuss the following quotations:

“...if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.” Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:17-20 (NLT)

"I went to a psychologist friend and said if 500 people claimed to see Jesus after he died, it was just a hallucination. He said hallucinations are an individual event. If 500 people have the same hallucination, that's a bigger miracle than the resurrection." Lee Strobel, author of *The Case for Christ*

"The first thing that stuck in the minds of the disciples was not the empty tomb, but rather the empty grave clothes - undisturbed in form and position." Josh McDowell, in *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*