

Jesus, Prince, and Savior



Why is Easter important? It does not take many Sundays before that question comes to mind. We understand the importance of Christmas, for it celebrates the incarnation, the event of God's becoming human. *Emmanuel* takes on literal truth as God walks with us, as one of us.

We understand the importance of Good Friday, for it remembers the crucifixion, the event of Christ becoming sin so that we can be set free. Atonement happens as God dies for us.

And then there is Easter. No doubt it is miraculous – the resurrection from the dead of God's Son, never to die again but instead to ascend to an eternal place in glory, is truly singular. But what is it about this event that makes it critical to our faith? If we have celebrated Christmas and mourned on Good Friday, why need we mark this other day?

There are many answers. Had Jesus stayed in the grave, His sacrifice would have been complete, but death's victory would have been final. Had Jesus stayed in the grave, He would have joined a line of other so-called messiahs who were in fact martyrs for a cause but whom we now have trouble distinguishing one from the other.

Jesus did not stay in the grave. Easter is a celebration of the power of God, over even death itself. Pain is ended. The emotion and passion of the crucifixion event – albeit necessary and worthy of our Tenebrae services and our remembrances – are overwhelmed by the triumph of one emerging whole from a tomb.

Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?

To have our debt paid by one who gives Himself to eternal bondage in the throes of hell would have left us knowing that Evil had its victim. To have our account erased by one who enters alone into the hold of Evil and emerges strong and free instead gives us not simply relief from our own sin-debt but instead victory over all that would enslave us.

Easter is the exclamation point on Jesus' role as Prince and Savior. He is not simply a martyr. He is not even simply a sacrifice. He is an overcomer. And thus we overcome, for when the trumpet shall sound, we shall be raised incorruptible.

Good Friday meant that Jesus died. Easter means that Jesus reigns. That is worth celebrating.

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