

Spelunking Scripture:
Easter

Exploring Important Passages of the Bible



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Introduction



The resurrection of Jesus is the linchpin of the Christian faith. As Paul wrote, “If Christ hasn’t been raised, then your faith is worthless” (1 Cor. 15:17a CEB). Without Easter, there would be no church. All four gospels present the resurrection of Jesus as historical occurrence, and most of the other books of the New Testament allude to or elucidate the meaning of the Resurrection. In Acts 1:1-8, the risen Christ commissions the apostles and promises them the gift of the Holy Spirit. And Paul explicitly refers to the Resurrection in most of his letters.

- In Romans 1:4, Paul describes Jesus as “publicly identified as God’s Son with power through his Resurrection from the dead” (CEB).
- In 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Paul summarizes the gospel message: “that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.”
- In 2 Corinthians 1:9, Paul speaks of “God who raises the dead.”
- In Galatians 1:1, Paul introduces himself as an apostle “through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.”
- In Ephesians 1:20, Paul writes, “God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead.”
- In Philippians 3:10, Paul declares: “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection.”
- In Colossians 1:18, Paul describes Christ Jesus as “the firstborn from the dead.”
- In 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, Paul challenges his readers “to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead.”
- In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, Paul’s teaches about the day of the Lord and that the second coming of Christ presumes the Resurrection.
- In 2 Timothy 2:8, Paul says: “Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead.”

And it is not just the gospel writers and Paul who talk about the resurrection of Jesus.

- Hebrews 13:20-21 provides this benediction: “Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus...make you complete.”
- In 1 Peter 1:3 we read, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”
- In Revelation 1:5, John calls Jesus Christ “the firstborn of the dead.”

So, the resurrection of Jesus is a recurrent theme in most of the books of the New Testament. That Jesus died for our sins and was raised to new life by the power of God is the heart of the gospel.

Easter is the most important day of the Christian year. Thus, it seems fitting that we should read and study the accounts on which Easter is based, namely the stories in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

The goal of this study is to move beneath the surface of the stories to explore what the Resurrection means for our lives. This is the method of “spelunking scripture.” As we examine each passage, we move beyond the details of the narrative to probe how it speaks to us, and to seek connections with life today. Each resurrection narrative, or post-resurrection appearance, is interpreted by three sermons. The sermons are designed to bring the resurrection of Jesus into our time and circumstance, and to enable us to recognize the risen Christ in our midst.

Spelunking Scripture is a series of studies based on some of the most important passages of the Bible. Other volumes in this series include *Christmas*, *The Letters of Paul*, and *Acts and the General Epistles of the New Testament*. The *Easter* study focuses on the passages in the Gospels that tell about the Resurrection, just as the Christmas study focuses on the birth narratives. All scripture is inspired, but not every passage of scripture is of equal importance. These passages of scripture that tell the story of the resurrection of Jesus are among the most important ones in the Bible.