

**THE  
GREATEST  
DAY IN  
HISTORY**

# THE GREATEST DAY IN HISTORY

April 5, 2015

**Sermon in a sentence:** The greatest day in the history of humanity is the day Jesus Christ rose from the dead!

**Congregational reading:** Matt. 28:1-10

**Matt 28:1-10 NKJV** Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4 And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. 5 But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you." 8 So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. 9 And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

**The birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are historical facts. No objective scholar will dispute this. (Yet there *are* many scholars who dispute it, but only by using different rules for accepting the biblical record than they do for any other historical document.)**

**Our calendar and chronology of time highlights the resurrection of Christ. The 'Christian Calendar' was**

**formulated by Dionysius Exiguus (a 6<sup>th</sup> century Catholic monk in Italy). From the 10<sup>th</sup> century onward, his method of dating has become the most commonly used. From him, we derive our designation of years: AD: “Anno Domini”: “in the year of the Lord”, and BC: “before Christ”.**

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**The resurrection of Jesus is what sets Christianity apart from every other religious system.**

**No other “god” has ever died for the sins of his people.**

**No other god has been raised from the dead through his own power.**

**Nowhere else do we see divinity and humanity fused together into one being as we see in the ‘God-man’, Jesus Christ.**

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**Napoleon Bonaparte was emperor of France from 1799 to 1815. This was during the time of the French Revolution as Napoleon tried to capture Europe for France. He had achieved many stunning victories during his military career and was poised to defeat the allies of Great Britain, Holland, Belgium and Germany early in June of 1815. However, due to tactical errors on the part of himself and his commanders the Allied armies were able to reorganize themselves and defeat him at the battle of Waterloo on June 15, 1815. This defeat led to him being deposed as emperor and he was sent into exile on an island off the West African coast, dying of cancer at 52 years of age.**

**There were no telephones or faxes in those days, so communication was often accomplished by using flags to send messages around the country. This system was called “semaphoring” a message, using these coded flags.**

The people of England knew that the Duke of Wellington was in a crucial battle with Napoleon so Wellington was quick to send a message back home as soon as it was over. As one of his ships came close to home, the signalman sent a message to a colleague on top of Winchester Cathedral, who got the message “Wellington Defeated”. At that point, a thick fog rolled in and he was unable to get any further details. Therefore the news quickly spread through England that Napoleon had been victorious. After about three hours however, the fog lifted, and the rest of the message came through: “Wellington Defeated The Enemy”.

So it was in Jerusalem on the Friday afternoon that Jesus died. The disciples got the message: “Jesus Defeated”. But three days later, the fog lifted and the rest of the message came through: “Jesus Defeated The Enemy”! The women came to the tomb and found an angel sitting on the stone at the entrance of the empty tomb. They had a little trouble believing what their ears were hearing, but they knew they had heard him say, “He is not here. He is risen”!!

**THIS WAS THE GREATEST DAY IN THE HISTORY OF HUMANITY!**

Easter Sunday is not simply a celebration of Jesus’ victory over death, hell and the grave. The reason for this celebration, and the reason we designate this day as the greatest day on our calendar, is because of what it means for us.

His resurrection confirms Jesus’ claim to be the “I AM”, the Almighty God.

His resurrection guarantees forgiveness of sin and eternal life for all who believe.

**His resurrection guarantees that we can receive His Holy Spirit.**

**Without His resurrection, nothing else Jesus did would be of the slightest benefit to us. He would just have been another dead holy man, devoid of any power to save. It would have been just as the Jews said: 'He couldn't even save Himself'.**

**However, the truth is, He arose, and offers His free gift of eternal life to each and every one of us!**

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**"Low in the grave He lay, Jesus my Saviour  
Waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord**

**Up from the grave He arose With a mighty triumph o'er His foes  
He arose the victor from the dark domain,  
And He lives forever with His saints to reign  
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah, Christ arose!"**

**Gloria in excelsis Deo!**

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**QUOTATIONS:**

**"There are no victories at discount prices."**

**General Dwight D. Eisenhower.**

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**Colin Chapman, in The Case for Christianity, quotes Ugandan bishop Festo Kivengere's account of the 1973 execution by firing squad of three men from his diocese: "February 10 began as a sad day for us in Kabale. People were commanded**

**to come to the stadium and witness the execution. Death permeated the atmosphere. A silent crowd of about three thousand was there to watch. I had permission from the authorities to speak to the men before they died, and two of my fellow ministers were with me. They brought the men in a truck and unloaded them. They were handcuffed and their feet were chained. The firing squad stood at attention.**

**As we walked into the center of the stadium, I was wondering what to say. How do you give the gospel to doomed men who are probably seething with rage? We approached them from behind, and as they turned to look at us, what a sight! Their faces were all alight with an unmistakable glow and radiance.**

**Before we could say anything, one of them burst out: "Bishop, thank you for coming! I wanted to tell you. The day I was arrested, in my prison cell, I asked the Lord Jesus to come into my heart. He came in and forgave me all my sins! Heaven is now open, and there is nothing between me and my God! Please tell my wife and children that I am going to be with Jesus. Ask them to accept him into their lives as I did."**

**The other two men told similar stories, excitedly raising their hands, which rattled their handcuffs. I felt that what I needed to do was to talk to the soldiers, not to the condemned. So I translated what the men had said into a language the soldiers understood. The military men were standing there with guns cocked and bewilderment on their faces. They were so dumbfounded that they forgot to put the hoods over the men's faces!**

**The three faced the firing squad standing close together. They looked toward the people and began to wave, handcuffs and all. The people waved back. Then shots were fired, and the three were with Jesus. We stood in front of them, our own hearts throbbing with joy, mingled with tears. It was a day never to be forgotten. Though dead, the men spoke loudly to all of Kigezi District and beyond, so that there was an upsurge of**

life in Christ, which challenges death and defeats it. The next Sunday, I was preaching to a huge crowd in the hometown of one of the executed men. Again, the feel of death was over the congregation. But when I gave them the testimony of their man, and how he died, there erupted a great song of praise to Jesus! Many turned to the Lord there.”

Ray Stamps.

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Walking through a park, I passed a massive oak tree. A vine had grown up along its trunk. The vine started small--nothing to bother about. But over the years the vine had gotten taller and taller. By the time I passed, the entire lower half of the tree was covered by the vine's creepers. The mass of tiny feelers was so thick that the tree looked as though it had innumerable birds' nests in it.

Now the tree was in danger. This huge, solid oak was quite literally being taken over; the life was being squeezed from it. But the gardeners in that park had seen the danger. They had taken a saw and severed the trunk of the vine--one neat cut across the middle. The tangled mass of the vine's branches still clung to the oak, but the vine was now dead. That would gradually become plain as weeks passed and the creepers began to die and fall away from the tree. How easy it is for sin, which begins so small and seemingly insignificant, to grow until it has a strangling grip on our lives. And yet, Christ's death has cut the power of sin. Yes, the "creepers" of sin still cling and have some effect. But sin's power is severed by Christ, and gradually, sin's grip dries up and falls away.

J. Alistair Brown.

## ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE READINGS

### “SEEING JESUS”

**Matt 27:57-28:15**

Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. 58 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. 59 When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. 61 And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb. 62 On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, 63 saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' 64 Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first." 65 Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how." 66 So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.

**Matthew 28** Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4 And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. 5 But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not

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Acts 10:39-43 And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. 40 Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, 41 not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. 42 And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. 43 To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

John 20:29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

**Heb 9:27-28 ... so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.**