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Past "EASTER" Beacon Publications

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## What does Easter mean to you?

Does Easter remind you of holidays, chocolates and fruit buns? These are part of the superficial traditions laid out by society to commemorate the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus has been the greatest person ever to live on this earth. He came to show us people how to live for God and to do His will every day. But why was this necessary? Back at creation, God made a beautiful world and placed two people, Adam and Eve, in it to look after it. But from the very beginning God took responsibility for everything that happened in His world.

Adam and Eve were given the ability to make both good and bad choices. Was this a mistake? No, God never makes mistakes but it wasn't long before they distrusted God and disobeyed His instructions. Sadly their offence ended their stay in their wonderful garden of abundance. Wickedness or sin had come into the human race and all people from then on were tainted with sin. This became a barrier between the holy Creator and His hurt creation. How could things ever be made right again?

As part of the Old Testament Law people who wanted to have their sins forgiven, had an animal killed for them periodically. The lifeblood of the animal covered their sins temporarily. However, this arrangement applied only to God's chosen people. The prophets of God throughout the generations made many predictions about a coming Messiah who would provide a permanent solution to deal with the sins of all people.

At the right time God sent His only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be a substitute for all the sacrificed animals. Jesus was born without the contamination of sin and could so satisfy God's justice when He died on a cruel cross outside Jerusalem. On that day Jesus fulfilled over thirty prophecies to show He really was the Messiah.

The Lord Jesus willingly gave up His life into His Father's hands. His life was not forced from Him, for He spoke with full strength in a loud voice. We find it distressing to think about all the inhumane treatment given to Jesus. Why should a perfect person have to suffer so much? Suffering is part of our world and all people have to suffer sometimes. Even God Himself suffered the loss of His own dear Son.

Jesus' burial was rushed. It was coming onto evening and those friends who cared for His body had to get home quickly before dark. Jesus often predicted His resurrection but none of His followers understood what He was saying at the time. When God brought Jesus permanently back to life again on the first day of the week, it gave great joy to His friends but terror and confusion to His enemies.

At Easter we remember what it cost God to deal with the sins of people. Only those who love and trust and rely on Jesus to be their Saviour and Lord can receive God's free gift of forgiveness and be accepted into heaven. And these are the very people who should be pleading to God in their prayers for the souls of their friends, families, strangers and enemies to be saved and have their sins blotted out by God.

***WHENEVER WE DOUBT THAT GOD LOVES US, JUST LOOK AT THE CROSS OF CHRIST!***

## Jesus' Words from the Cross

The dying words of famous men have been recorded for us to glimpse into their character and gain insights from their beliefs for their future life beyond the grave.

The Lord Jesus Christ made seven statements from the Cross and, apart from the first and last ones, we're not sure in which order they came. Three each were recorded in the Gospels of Luke and John, and one in both Matthew and Mark.

### **“Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”**

First after Jesus had been nailed on the cross, in Luke 23:34, Jesus prayed for His enemies. He had been mocked, insulted, whipped and condemned even though the judge had found Him innocent. Forgiveness is central to Christianity. God forgives our sins as we trust in Jesus and confess and forsake them. But we in turn must forgive those who have wronged us. Unforgiveness brings only bitterness and regret. Jesus gave us the supreme example of how we should forgive our enemies.

### **“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”**

In fulfilment of the prophecy in Isaiah 53:12 that Jesus was numbered with the transgressors, He was crucified between two robbers guilty of crimes against the Roman government. At first both robbers insulted Jesus but in Luke 23:43 one robber repented and rebuked the other one. He said that they were being punished justly for their crimes but Jesus had done nothing wrong. The repentant robber asked Jesus, “Remember me when you come into your kingdom.” His humble request brought him joy beyond anything he could have ever imagined.

**Jesus said to His mother: “Dear woman, here is your son!”**

**Then He said to John: “Here is your mother!”**

The Apostle John had gone with Jesus' mother, Mary, his own mother and Mary of Magdalene and a number of other women to watch near the cross of Jesus. Mary was a widow and Jesus, even though He was in agony, remembered to take care of her future needs. (John 19:26-27) Mary's grief must have been terrible even though she had been warned by Simeon, the old man in the Temple when Jesus was a little baby, that a sword would pierce her own heart too.

**“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”**

Darkness covered the whole land for three hours from midday. This wasn't an ordinary solar eclipse because the Passover always fell during the full moon. The darkness was a sign that God had withdrawn His presence from the human race. Just before He died, Jesus cried out loudly this quote from Psalm 22:1.

Jesus had experienced the darkness of separation from God and God's full anger against sinful people.

**“I thirst.”**

Jesus, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture (Psalm 69:21) would be fulfilled, said in John 19:28: “I am thirsty.” A container of sour wine or vinegar was sitting close by, so they filled a sponge with it and lifted it up to His lips. When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said:

**“It is finished.”**

Jesus bowed His head. He cried out with a loud voice:

**“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”**

This prayer is an expression of total trust in God. In Luke 23:46 Jesus breathed His last. He had finished the work His Father had given Him to do here on earth. Usually a crucified person at the point of death didn't have the strength to cry out. Jesus' cry wasn't a cry of death but a cry of victory. He had just won the greatest victory ever! By His life of perfect obedience to God and His death on the cross, He had just opened the doors of heaven to all people who recognized His great love for them.

Jesus had said, while He was still with His disciples, “Greater love has no one than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13) The Apostle John repeated this by saying, “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. (1 John 3:16)

These sayings of Jesus as He was dying on the cross reflect how closely Jesus had been with His Father in heaven. He is now seated on the right hand of His Father interceding for all who have claimed His free gift of salvation.

*More about Jesus’ sacrifice for us is listed on our website in the March and April programs.*

## Jesus Prayed: “Father, Forgive...”

The willingness to forgive others for the wrongs they’ve done against us is an essential part of living a stress free life. Those who fail to forgive and forget, often live with deep-seated bitterness and are resentful of their circumstances in life.

In the Lord’s Prayer (Matt. 6:12) Jesus taught us to ask God to “forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.” Do we really mean it? Forgiveness is a decision, an act of the will which results in true freedom and peace from the pain of past distressing memories. Col. 3:13 says- “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” Forgiveness between believers in the Lord Jesus is not only expected but regarded as necessary for the ongoing work of Jesus’ kingdom.

When Jesus was dying on the cross at Calvary around AD 30 He prayed (in Luke 23:34): “Father, forgive them for they don’t know what they are doing.” He was speaking about the religious authorities of His day and the Roman overlords for killing the Son of God.

Jesus Christ (the anointed One) as God existing from eternity past will continue to live on forever. It was impossible for Him to die as God. So He came to earth as a human being to pay the penalties owed to His Father in heaven for the sins of the world. Because God is a God of justice, someone had to pay. That someone was Jesus. The death of Jesus on the cross fulfilled the justice of God. Jesus wasn’t dying on the cross for His own sin or any wrongdoing, for He was entirely sinless. He died for the sins of all the world. (1st John 2:2) Jesus made the way back to God open for every person but each individual has to claim their pardon as a free gift from Jesus by faith, believing that He has always been God and asking for the forgiveness of their sins. Jesus never refuses anyone who sincerely asks Him.

This is extraordinary love, the unconditional removal of a debt forever. When we truly understand just how much we've been forgiven by our heavenly Father, we won't hold back forgiveness to others who've wronged us.

God wants us to "get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behaviour." (Ephesians 4:31) Long term unforgiveness hardens a person's heart and brings a heavy burden each day when negative thoughts of past events rerun in the mind. However, some people who've been abused in childhood emotionally or physically for long periods of time say that they just can't forgive their tormenter. And in their own strength they simply can't. Only God's power can enable a person to forgive the deep hurts unfairly inflicted upon them.

First, they must look for God's mercy in Jesus Christ as their sin bearer, Lord and Saviour. Upon request, in compassion God will wipe their sins away, never to remember them again. This permanent debt cancellation is available to all who choose to believe. They then receive God's Holy Spirit within them to enable them to do those things which they believed were impossible before committing their lives to Christ.

Christians need to forgive, not because it's easy or feels right, but because God wants us to be free to follow His plan for our lives. Forgiveness isn't a natural response; we need God's help to overcome any long-standing anger and resentment. It's a process taking significant amounts of time, rather than just a once-off prayer. Then each harmed person comes to placing their offender into the care of God, surrendering their own emotional pain to God and praying that God will deal with that person in His good time. This brings a change of attitude, because the Lord makes such a difference in a believer's life. In prayer they look past the wrongdoer's faults and see their need for a Saviour.



But some offenders refuse to take responsibility for their past actions and there can never be any reconciliation. Every Christian is called to suffer in some way but with the suffering comes blessings. God wants us to take any unresolved issues from the past and release them to Him. In our prayers ask God to bring good out of bad situations. The attitude of forgiving others is a way of life. “ Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about you.” 1st Peter 5:7

Further Reading: June Hunt’s book: *How to Forgive...When You Don’t Feel Like it.*

## Why Did Jesus Have to Die?

When we read the Scriptural accounts of what the Lord Jesus did during His ministry time here on earth, we recognize the goodness and unselfishness of how He lived. He helped so many people to be well physically and spiritually too. Yet not everyone agreed with His teaching or accepted the miracles He did as proof of His being God.

Why would that be? Being born into the human family meant that He was regarded as a sinner like everyone else descended from Adam and Eve, the very first sinners on the planet. But it is revealed in the Scriptures that He wasn't the physical son of his step-father Joseph, husband of Mary, Jesus's mother.

Jesus claimed that He was God. Though the word 'Trinity' is not used in the Bible, the truth of God revealing Himself in three persons is included. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all called God, given worship as God, exist eternally, and are involved in doing things that only God could do. Although God reveals Himself in three persons, God is One and cannot be divided. All are involved completely whenever One of the Three is active.

Then where did God come from? God always existed. A prayer of Moses given to the Lord in Psalm 90 says: "(Lord), before You created the hills or brought the world into being, you were eternally God, and You will be God forever."

God claims to be the only real God there is. In Isaiah, Chapter 44, Verses 6 & 7, the Lord God gives His own words about being the only God: "I am the first, the last, the only God; there is no other god but me. Could anyone else have done what I did? Who could have predicted all that would happen from the very beginning to the end of time?"

We need to accept by faith that all God's prophecies given to His faithful servants throughout the centuries will come true, because God is perfect and he cannot tell a lie. We also need to understand that everything we can see around us is only temporary, with spiritual things being unseen but lasting forever.

Adam and Eve's stay in the Garden of Eden was conditional – that they didn't eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. When they did, God wasn't taken by surprise. He told them then of a coming Redeemer who would save those who wanted to be free from their burden of sin. And 4,000 years later Jesus, God's only Son, was born as a human being. He willingly laid aside His privileges in heaven to descend to earth.

If Jesus isn't God and wasn't our Creator, then He's only a created being. How then could He be an adequate sacrifice to pay for the sins of the world committed against a perfect God? Jesus must have been God to be raised again from death and be accepted by God the Father as the perfect sacrifice for sin, dying only once. Why did Jesus have to die? The hymn writer said it so well: "There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin. He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in."

In the New Testament book of Hebrews, after His ascension back to heaven, Jesus is referred to as the great high priest whose ministry exceeded the Old Testament Israeli priesthood in importance! While all the others died and remained dead, Jesus is the high priest for ever for all those who place their trust in Him and depend on Him.

God desires to give people abundant blessings but for people to receive them there is a condition: a person must love and obey God. This involves a complete surrender of one's self and will power to Him, always seeking the way God would have us go. Anything that comes between us and God is an idol and must be destroyed to please God. Whenever we sin we go immediately to God requesting forgiveness and restoration of our relationship with Him.

In 1 John 1:9 it says: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness.”

## Our Judge Died for Us

Thoughts of Judgment Day seem to have slipped from the conscious thinking of so many people living in our times. Yet the Bible promises a judgment for every person who has ever lived on planet earth.

People need to recognize that they will one day have to answer to God for what they've done on earth, either good, bad or evil. (2 Corinthians 5:10) We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in our earthly body. Keeping this in mind would make many people consider their planned future words and actions before they actually do them.

A proper understanding of the superiority and supremacy of God over human beings and all His creation would help people to realise the importance of having a good relationship with God. He is sovereign over all things and everything God does is right and just. His majesty, if considered, makes us realise how dependant we are on His mercy. He first showed this mercy in the prediction that He would send a Saviour to deal with sin. (Genesis 3:15)

At the right time in human history God sent His one and only sinless Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to teach us God's ways. But jealous rebellious leaders didn't like His words and ways and killed Him in the most cruel manner they could. The Lord Jesus arose from the grave three days after His death. He told His disciples that He'd been given all authority in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18)

Jesus died for all people's sins but not everyone is going to heaven. Many reject His rule over them and they will be judged by Him at a separate Great White Throne judgment later. (Revelation 20:11-15) But only those who accept His rule over them, trust in His finished work on the cross of Calvary to deal with their sin problem, asking Him to forgive their sins and be their Saviour and Lord will be allowed into heaven. From then on for the rest of their earthly life, they belong to Jesus and follow His plan for their lives.

Jesus' first judgment is known as the Bema seat of Christ and is for believers in Jesus only. This judgment is not to decide if a person is going to heaven or hell but for rewards for His works well done in the power of the Holy Spirit and not in one's own strength. (2 Corinthians 5:9-11)

God doesn't ignore or overlook sinful actions, words or thoughts and, if not confessed to Him and forsaken, there will be significant consequences, the most sobering of which is the fact that a person cannot change anything at their judgment.

The Lord Jesus, our Redeemer from our deserved penalty for sins committed against God, will one day be our Judge. God's ways are so much higher than anything we can imagine. Isn't it amazing that our future Judge died for us! One day we will give an account to Him for the things done in our bodies here on earth and Jesus is expecting us to bring Him profitable works for growing His kingdom.

As we remember Good Friday, we recall God's great sacrifice to make it possible for all those who believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, to become heirs with Him in the next life. (Romans 8:17) While we still live on this earth there will be many troubles and trials but we mustn't make them seem worse by a bad attitude or self-pity. Christians in countries where persecution is openly practised expect to suffer because Jesus suffered for us. The Lord Jesus warned us in John 16:33 "Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." Our petitions and prayers of praise need to be continually raised to Him and followed up with grateful thanks for all He's done for us.

While our faith is proven by our actions, the consequences of our actions impact not only ourselves but others around us and how they view Christ and His followers. May this Easter time see a renewal of our commitment to Christ and His work for us to do.

## The Symbol of Divine Love

In the Bible, God claims to be the only real God there is. Isaiah Chapter 45:18 says: “The Lord created the heavens – he is the one who is God! He formed and made the earth... he did not make it a desolate waste, but a place for people to live.”

The Old Testament prophecies tell in detail the coming of one Person who would save His people from their sins. Some 61 prophecies are considered major and more than 330 altogether single out one person as the future Messiah to defeat Satan. We need to accept by faith that all God’s prophecies given throughout the centuries will come true, because God is perfect and He cannot tell a lie. In Romans 1:20 it explains that since the creation of the world God’s invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that nonbelievers in Him are without excuse.

Prophecy is God’s own method of proving His truth. Who could have given such a detailed account of a life before that person was even born? Only God and God alone could have done such a thing. God so thoroughly justified Jesus Christ as the divine Saviour from sin that nonbelievers in Him will be speechless at the final judgment. We also need to understand that everything we can see around us is only temporary, with spiritual things being unseen but lasting forever.

Many people at some point in their lives ask the big three questions that only humans can ask: Where did I come from? What is the meaning of life and my purpose in it? What happens when we die? Yet so many people seem to be preoccupied with the present and their future that they blindly assume that the future will be more of the past. However, the Bible points to a finish date for the universe.

God gave Moses His perfect Law but it was impossible for any person (except Jesus) to keep the law. As the law couldn't give life and salvation to sinners God needed a plan for saving sinners without any relaxation of His own law.

The sinless Son of God, Jesus Christ, was chosen before the foundation of the world to be our substitute and has redeemed everyone who trusts Him to deliver them from the curse that the law brings. In Isaiah 53:5 it says: "The Lord made the punishment fall on Him (Jesus), the punishment all of us deserved."

Every one of us needs to realise just how guilty our wrongdoing has made us before God that we weep over our sin and repent. Romans 10:4 says: "For Christ has brought the Law to an end, so that everyone who believes (in Him) is put right with God." This means that Christians aren't under the Mosaic Law.

Only God Himself, within Himself, could withstand His own perfect and right judgment against sin. Divine love is symbolized by a cross of death. Jesus is God's Messiah and God proved it by bringing Him back to life after being killed on a Roman cross to pay the penalty for human sin. This shows the love of God for sinners like us and how very much we should appreciate all that He's done for us!

God has decreed that one day Jesus will rule the world as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Do you believe that Jesus loved you so very much that He was prepared to die to redeem you from your sin debt? Can you truthfully say: "Jesus is mine and I am His?"



## The Proof of Jesus' Resurrection

All Christian beliefs stand or fall on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus! Was Jesus brought back to life on the third day after His horrific death by crucifixion? Or did He not actually die? Or did His disciples steal His body away to make it look as though He was resurrected? What is the evidence?

Firstly, there are a number of pagan historians of the first two hundred years after the birth of Christ but *hostile* to Jesus and His followers, who actually confirm that:

Jesus lived in Judea, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and had followers who were persecuted for their faith in Christ. He was a wise and influential man who died for His beliefs. The Jewish leadership was somehow responsible for Jesus' death. Jesus' followers adopted His beliefs and lived their lives accordingly. Jesus had the ability to accurately predict the future, was crucified under the reign of Tiberius Caesar and demonstrated His wounds after he was resurrected.

Also, the first Christians believed Jesus was GOD, the first Christians upheld a high moral code, and these early followers met regularly to worship Jesus. They were committed to their belief Jesus was God and withstood the torment and punishment of the Roman Empire. Jesus had a curious and immediate impact on His followers, empowering them to die courageously for what they knew to be true. He taught about repentance and about the family of God. These teachings were quickly adopted by Jesus' followers and exhibited to the world around them.

Then there were the *hostile* Jewish historians who usually wrote in a very harsh, critical and even a demeaning way about Jesus. But there is still much these writings confirm: Jesus lived in Palestine, was a wise man and a teacher, worked amazing deeds, was accused by the Jews, crucified under Pilate and had followers called Christians.

These ancient accounts *hostile* to the Biblical record mean that we are sure that Jesus actually lived and worked many miracles but did He actually die on the cross at His crucifixion? The floggings Roman soldiers gave to prisoners were so savage that many men didn't survive their flogging but died before the Romans could put them on a crucifixion cross. Crucifixion is a very cruel way of slowly killing a prisoner. The Roman soldiers knew when a man was dead. And the Scriptures confirm that they didn't break Jesus' legs to hasten His death as they did to the two other criminals with Him. This denies any possibility of Jesus reviving in the cool dark tomb where His body was hastily laid before sunset.

Is it possible then that Jesus' disciples stole His body out of the tomb some time at night? Although Jesus had told His disciples that He would rise from the grave, they were grief stricken at His death. They were also hiding away in fear that the authorities would be coming for them next. It was so widely known that Jesus had predicted His own resurrection that even the Jewish religious leaders knew of it and wanted to make completely sure that Jesus' body never left the tomb.

They petitioned the Romans to seal the 2-ton rock in front of the tomb and place a guard of Roman soldiers around it so that no one could tamper with Jesus' body. When Jesus did rise from death, the soldiers were reluctant witnesses and fearful of being disciplined for not stopping His escape. They rushed to the Jewish authorities, who bribed them not to tell anyone Jesus had actually resurrected but to say they'd fallen asleep on the job, a crime punishable by death. They all knew of Jesus' resurrection before His own disciples did.

Our Christian faith is truth based and the Lord Jesus has work for us all to do: In Acts Chapter 26 the Lord Jesus said to the Apostle Paul at his conversion: “I am sending you to the Gentiles (or non-Jews) to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God’s people, who are set apart by faith in me.”

**“Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.” (1 Corinthians 15:58b)**

## Jesus' Ascension

The Lord Jesus rose from the tomb on Easter Sunday or the Jewish Feast of Firstfruits.

Forty days later He ascended back to heaven. Ascension Day is always on a Thursday but has been given little attention in many churches. Yet it should not be forgotten or ignored. For without the Ascension, the death and resurrection of Jesus would carry far less value in the plan of redemption. It is this glorious Ascension that completes the atoning work of Christ, the guarantee of His promises, the proof of His claims, and the beginning of His dominion.

The Lord Jesus Christ is superior and supreme over all others except His Heavenly Father. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John recorded the ministry of the Lord Jesus on earth. The book of Hebrews details the ministry of the Lord Jesus in heaven.

Jesus Christ is greater than:

- **Angels.** Angels are a separate creation of God. They worship Him and will be our servants in heaven. We cannot turn into angels when we die, nor should we worship them while we are here on earth.
- **Any human leader.** He has the more excellent name of 'Son' and His throne lasts forever.
- **All earthly high priests.** He was appointed as our great High Priest in heaven by God Himself. He will never have any successor.
- **All earthly sacrifices.** The work of the earthly priests was never finished because the sacrifice of animals could never take away sin. But when Jesus died on the cross and God raised Him from death, His shed blood could redeem all those wanting to be free from their sin.

- **Everyone else.** In The Revelation to John, Chapter 5, no one else was found worthy to open the scroll and its seven seals of judgment on the earth for all the people's continued wickedness.

Jesus Christ as the sinless Son of God died once, never to die again. His atoning sacrifice was the only one acceptable to His Father. He said an amazing thing in Matthew, Chapter 28: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." No ordinary man could have ever said that; only God's own Son could make such a statement.

Just before His ascension Jesus gave His disciples their instructions to expand His kingdom on earth: "Make disciples, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." This "Great Commission" is to confirm individual believers in their faith in Jesus' atoning work. Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they had received the promised Holy Spirit.

At the last moment before His ascension, Jesus promised that He would be with His disciples always, even to the end of the age. Jesus then ascended into heaven before their very eyes. Two angels were sent to give them a promise: "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven. (Acts 1:10-11) The disciples were filled with joy and worshipped Him as the Lord, the Messiah and Son of God. Then they returned to Jerusalem and spent their time in the Temple praying and praising God. Jesus Christ now sits at God's right hand interceding for all those who have accepted by faith His redemption from their sins.

The entire ministry of our Lord has been and continues to be to fit us for glory. The lesson should be clear: We must live above the world and not like the present world in its rejection of Jesus and His teaching. The Scriptures tell us again and again not to love the world or the things that are in the world, for these are passing away. We are to lay up treasures in heaven.

*More of Jesus' excellence as Prophet, High Priest and King of kings is to be found on our website in the May and June programs.*

## The Coming Day of Reckoning

When God created the heavens and the universe, He created a countless number of angels as spiritual beings to serve Him. Similar to humans, angels were given personalities that display intelligence, emotion and freewill. Yet God hid His plan of salvation for people from them until He sent Jesus to come to earth.

Angels were given the choice to follow God or rebel against Him. And a rebel is just what the top angel named Lucifer became. Lucifer was created the most beautiful angel in heaven. Yet he became proud and desired a throne that was even greater than God's. Lucifer became God's great adversary and was renamed Satan or the Devil. His angel followers were cast out of heaven and serve him as demons and evil powers.

Satan determined to war against God and all of God's good creation. The first people, Adam and Eve, belonged to God. Satan tempted them to sin against God and in doing so, separated them from God. Satan became their spiritual master, which has led them and all their descendants into being spiritually separated from God.

God responded to this attack by promising to send a Person who would restore human relationships with Him and crush Satan. Jesus Christ, God's Son, was that Person and at His death on the cross, He defeated Satan completely. People's relationships were restored with God if they wanted to be reconciled with Him, and a countdown to Satan's final judgment and punishment began.

Satan knows that a day of reckoning is coming soon. As his time runs short on this earth, he and his demons increase their deceptive and evil activities. They oppose God's plans and lead people away from Christ. They seduce many with wicked doctrine and draw them to a form of godliness that has no power to save. Yet Satan's war against God was lost before it even began. God is sovereign, knows everything and has unlimited power. No one can oppose Him and Satan, still a created being, must submit to God's ultimate authority.

The Bible is nearly one-third full of prophecies which foretell the future. A good number have already been fulfilled but there are many more still to be completed. Everything God has promised He will deliver. This is how we know He is the One True God. No other god or demon has ever truthfully told what will happen to the future of the world. Satan knows he will be punished for his rebellion but he hadn't known Jesus would rise from the dead. If he'd known, he would never have incited the people to kill Jesus in the first place.

For both angels and humans, it isn't enough to simply have knowledge of who God is. We must be willing to come to Him on His terms and call Him our Lord. People who depend on and trust in the Lord Jesus know that a day of reckoning is coming for them too. Have they made God's work top priority in their lives? Or have they majored on the minor things of life and left the really important things undone? Jesus wants His people purchased by His shed blood at Calvary to be faithful and fruitful.

There is a third group: people uncommitted to the Lord are rushing about with their hearts and minds set on the things of value in this world only. They may not even be aware of what the future holds for them. Or they may have heard about a coming Judgment Day but decided foolishly that they would worry about that when they come to it. However, by then it will be too late to do anything. Faithful Christians need to be gently pointing out to their relatives and friends and anyone who will listen, that Jesus died for them at Easter some 2,000 years ago. Neglect of His free offer of salvation from the control of Satan will not be excused later.

Jesus arose from death and at the appointed times all people who have ever lived will rise again too, some to everlasting happiness with Him and some to everlasting torment in the fires of hell. Each person has to make a choice whether they want to belong to Jesus or not. No decision for Christ means a person is still under Satan's control and separated from God. People of all ages should be preparing for their day of reckoning.

< END OF "EASTER" BEACONS >

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