

Why do Christians celebrate Easter?

Easter is a national holiday, celebrated by many with the familiar Easter eggs and chocolate bunnies. However, for Christians, this celebration is one like no other. It is holy and truly revered. Why? Because it is the celebration of the gift of forgiveness, redemption, reconciliation, and salvation God provided to the world through His Son, Jesus Christ.



In the beginning was God. God is triune, that is, One in being, three in persons. God has eternally been One God, and in that One God is three unique personhoods: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A three-person union of perfect love. In the beginning was God. In the beginning was love. In the beginning was community. In the beginning was relationship. The very Being that sustains the universe is everything we could ever desire. Pure love. Pure goodness. Pure truth. Pure justice. Pure righteousness. Pure holiness. In a life-giving community of love. That is who our God is. Then God, being self-sufficient and not depending on anything for His existence, chose to create the universe. God spoke and all of time, space, energy and matter – the universe- came into being. Then God, as the final act of creation, created us. Human beings. Creatures set apart from the rest of God's creation to enjoy His good creation. Why? Because His very nature is love. And we get to be the recipients of that love. Our story begins with a loving Creator. And the final act of creation is our loving God creating us in His image. Being made in the image of God gives us purpose. To show people God's love, goodness, and creative nature through our lives. God put us in charge of the creation, and it is our job to take care of each other and the world according to His standard of good and evil. Furthermore, God created us to fellowship with Him, to be in His loving presence, in loving communion with Him, dwelling together for all eternity. This has been our purpose from the beginning, and it is the result of being made in the image of God. In that, humans are given free will – the choice to choose to either obey God and trust His standard of good and evil or disobey Him and choose their own standard of good and evil. God looked at all His creation and saw that it was good.

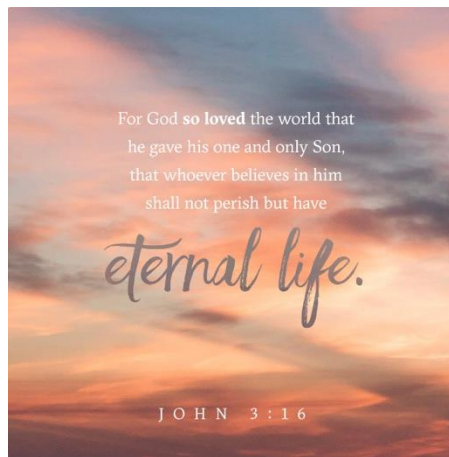
Unfortunately, things did not stay that way. Humanity decided to sin, to rebel against God. They disobeyed God's instructions and decided to not trust in God's standard of good and evil but determine good and evil on their own. This is where sin entered creation, distorting the world we live in. It became a part of human nature, to oppose God and hurt His creation including other human beings. Why? Because rebelling against God is rebelling against the One who is love. Sin is the opposite of everything God is and as a result separates us from God because He is love and therefore hates evil and injustice. Without a relationship with God, we were left to our own devices to make our own standards of good and evil which, without God, are tainted and unjust. It chooses hatred as opposed to love. Greed rather than generosity. Injustice rather than justice. As a result, without God, we lost eternity. Subjected to the bondage of death and hell - God's honouring of those who choose to remain in sin - as the just punishment for our sins that have offended a holy God. God in His righteousness condemns sinners.

But the Good News is that God still loves us. He doesn't want anyone to perish in hell. No matter what we've done or who we are God loves us. Even when we sin, God still chooses grace. Grace is unmerited favour -can't earn it, don't deserve it, God just loves you -grace. This grace was God's saving plan: to reconcile humanity from sin and death unto Himself. To make a way for humans to be saved from His wrath and righteous judgement. This plan would be consummated on Easter Sunday.

The question is how can God be just and at the same time simply justify and forgive sinners? The answer is in the Person of Jesus Christ. For all have sinned and therefore fall short of the God's glorious standard of perfection. As a result, we are condemned by God, guilty in His sight because He is holy and righteous. The just punishment of sin is death. This because it is so evil in God's eyes as it brings destruction on His good creation and hurts the world He loves and so because God loves His creation, He hates sin. There is nothing we can do in and of ourselves to right this wrong or atone for our sins or be made right with God. To have fellowship with God and be right with God, we had to be perfect and sinless because God is perfect and sinless. Yet none of us could meet that requirement. No matter how hard humanity tries, no matter how many good deeds we do, we can't reach God's holy standard. We can't work our way into God's good books or earn His forgiveness for our sins. Even if we could, the outcome would be those 'good enough' judging those who aren't 'good enough'. This is bad news for humans. But, because God loves the world so much, the Son, Jesus Christ, chose to leave His throne in heaven and clothe Himself in human form to die on behalf of sinners to save them from the wrath of God. He became the Jewish man – Jesus of Nazareth. He became human, born of a virgin, and thus not inheriting the sin nature of humanity. This meant He was holy and perfect. He experienced all the hardships, temptation and sufferings humans go through yet when tempted He did not sin. Not only did He not sin, but He also lived a life of perfect righteousness, a life that glorified God by perfectly loving God with all His heart, mind and soul always and loving others completely and selflessly. Even when being humiliated, beaten, and mocked by the very people He died to redeem, He loved them and forgave them. A perfect, righteous life. What we did not, could not and would not. Then, on Good Friday, the Son of God goes to Calvary to die on a cross to reconcile humanity back to God. Because on that cross Jesus, the sinless Son of God, bore upon Himself all the sins of humanity. That is, every sin committed by every human – ever. So rather than punishing the sinners for their sins, God punished His beloved Son, who sacrificed His life for humanity, by pouring out His holy wrath, that we deserved, upon Jesus Christ. Jesus is without sin and so was able to be the righteous and pleasing sacrifice to atone for the sins of humanity. Jesus is God and so was the only One able to take on the punishment for sin on behalf of others. The full extent of hell, the infinite punishment for every sin ever committed against an infinite God, was completely suffered by Jesus on that cross. The holy wrath of God against sinners was satisfied in Christ's sacrifice who, as He drew His last breath, cried out 'It is finished.' Our debt was paid in full by Christ, the Son paid a real payment to the Father on the behalf of humanity, meaning that God no longer condemns those who put their faith in Christ and the Holy Spirit lives in us and reminds us of this beauty, quickening the reality of our acquittal and redemption. Christ took on our sin, our failures, our rebellion so that He suffers the punishment we deserve. This makes a way for humans become right with God as God imputes the righteousness, perfection and holiness of Christ upon those who put their faith in Christ. We are no longer bound to a life of sin or separated from God – Jesus has set us free and reconciled us to God. Just as on that cross, as

Jesus bore on Himself our sins, God treated Him as a sinner, God no longer sees those who put their faith in Christ as sinners, but as His sinless, beloved and righteous children. Not because of anything we've done, but because of what Christ has done for us. We aren't good enough, but that doesn't matter because Jesus was good enough for us, on our behalf.

Then after three days on Easter Sunday, having died and been buried in a tomb, Jesus rose from the dead by His own power, by the power of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Father. This was God's vindication of His Son and proof that the death He died on Calvary was sufficient to pay for all our sins. That Jesus has conquered sin on the cross, and in His resurrection has conquered death. This is Good News. That we don't have to strive, or must do millions of good works, or must be perfect in order to be made right with God. But simply believe in what God did in His love for us on Calvary and in the resurrection from the dead, in order to reconcile us back to Himself through Jesus Christ His beloved Son. That we too, through Christ, are free from the bondage of sin, the guilt of sin and the death penalty of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. There is no more guilt in life. There is no more fear in death. Nothing separates us from God. After His resurrection, Jesus ascended to Heaven to return to His throne as our mediator between God and humanity. Meaning that through Christ we can have fellowship with God as we pray to God. God then sent the Holy Spirit to humanity to empower those who put their faith in Christ to live the same lives as Jesus did. In the sense that we are to live with love, joy, peace patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control. We become born again through the Holy Spirit giving us a new life, as our former way of living that offended God and that Jesus died to set us free from has been washed away by the atoning blood of Christ. In this new life the Holy Spirit gets rid of



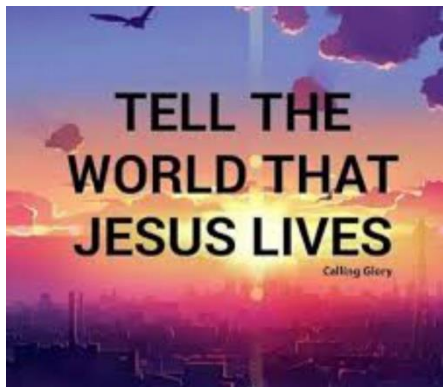
our old desires that were self-centred and didn't please God. In their place, the Holy Spirit gives us new desires that glorify God by loving God and loving others more and more each day because of all God has done for us through Christ, who loves us and gave Himself for us. Though there are times when we will mess up, we will sin because the world right now is still not fully reconciled to God, the devil and his demons are still working to steal the minds and desires of humanity away from God's truth and gift of salvation, kill the peace of humanity and destroy the hope of humanity, and our bodies and bodily desires are still able to be tempted to sin and can give in to sin. Yet even when we sin, they are atoned for by the blood that Jesus shed on the cross for us once and for all. The Holy Spirit gives us the strength to

overcome sin when we put our trust in Him in the face of temptation. The Holy Spirit keeps us sealed with God's promise of salvation until the day Christ returns to Earth to save those who have put their faith in Him. Though in this world we will face trials and tribulation, we can count it all joy and endure them with perfect peace because our hope is in Christ who has overcome all and gives us all we need to live lives that glorify Him. Furthermore, in this new life, we now partake in God's plan to reconcile humanity and the world to Himself, with hope in God's promise to make all things new by getting rid of sin, death, the devil and his demons from His creation along with those who choose to remain in sin. They are placed in away from God's creation in hell, isolated from God's good creation to receive God's justice rather than choosing to receive God's grace. God honours their free will, but God's plan is to no longer allow sin to bring hell's suffering and destruction in His good creation and to restore things to how they were originally, for His universe to be a place where there is no more death, nor sorrow, nor

crying, neither will there be any more pain, for the former things are all passed away. For all of humanity fellowshiped in holy communion and right standing with God. For humanity no longer be in mortal bodies but have a new immortal nature and take back their role as God's stewards over His creation for all eternity.

For this reason, God became a human. This is the purpose of our Lord Jesus Christ's death on the cross. This is the hope we have because of His resurrection. This is how much God loves humanity.

This is why Christians celebrate Easter.



**GOD DEMONSTRATES
HIS OWN LOVE FOR
US IN THIS: WHILE
WE WERE STILL
SINNERS, CHRIST
DIED FOR US.**

ROMANS 5:8