

Easter - Pete Greig

Read John 20:1-18

“Christmas is important but Easter is decisive” - Arsene Wenger.

This story is true. Jesus Christ really did rise from the dead. According to the BBC, 50% of people in this country believe that, including some people who call themselves non-religious. Jesus wasn't just a good human being; he was either a liar, a madman or he was who he said he was. Either spit in his face or fall at his feet and call him Lord. There is no middle option. If he did rise from the dead, that has life changing implications for every one of us. It means life after death. We grow up aware of death, and if you're an atheist, it's as depressing as it seems. If you're with the majority of people on earth who believe there is more, then there's hope. **What difference does it make now if there is life after death?**

Because of Jesus, not only is there life after death, but there is life before death. He came not only to bring us life, but life to the full. He labels things as sin if they're destructive. About everything else he says “I want you to live and laugh and have life to the full”. Because of Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection, the power of sin has been broken! We all know the unfairness of addiction, the evil we see around us, the terrible things people do to each other, the world and themselves. 2.6 billion people around the world have discovered that Jesus can give you a fresh start in life. **What is sin? How would you describe sin to someone who didn't know the gospel?**

Logically, if Jesus rose from the dead, he is still alive today. We can see him changing lives.

Raye, a famous singer, quotes scripture in her latest album. She's not a squeaky clean Christian but is brutally honest about her own self destructive behaviour, and so full of hope. She says without Jesus she might not even be here.

Alexei Navalny, the Russian opposition leader, whose body was found in prison on February 16th, said of his activism, “The fact is that I am a Christian... and that helps me a lot in my activities”. Far from being the opiate of the masses, Christianity is more often the catalyst to overthrow tsars and political leaders, and to realise Biblical principles of justice.

Adam Peaty, the olympic swimmer, said “the gold medal is the coldest thing that you wear”, it's his faith that's helped with his mental battles. “It's prayer that keeps me inspired and on the right track”.

The media wants to make out that as Christians we are on the fringes of society, but we are the biggest block of people on earth. **Does it surprise you that Christianity makes up the biggest block of people on earth? How is this different from the story we see in the media?**

We had the privilege of hearing Daisy's testimony. If you haven't heard it, it will be on the podcast from this week and is well worth a listen.

Our belief is not just founded on wishful thinking. It's our conviction that this makes logical and intellectual sense. Lee Strobel was a strong atheist, and when his wife became a Christian he spent years looking into the historical facts to try and disprove her faith. He realised the key question was ‘Did Jesus really die, and did he really rise from the dead?’. He discovered the evidence of Jesus' death was so overwhelming, even atheist historians said the crucifixion was indisputable. So why was the tomb empty? If the Jewish leaders had taken the body, they'd have reproduced it when people started claiming Jesus had risen from the dead, and same for the romans. If the disciples had taken the body and made up that they'd seen and spoken with Jesus, but the problem with that argument is that most of them died for their beliefs, and not a single one of them went back on what they'd said. 8 independent sources claimed to have seen Jesus after he'd risen. In the end, Strobel concluded that it would take more faith to stick to his atheism than it would to become a Christian.

What is the reason you believe in Jesus? What was the first reason you believed in Jesus?

Easter makes sense if Jesus was who he said he was. Most people who have lived believe that ‘God’ is real. Christians believe that God ultimately revealed himself in Jesus Christ, to intervene for us. We have all fallen short and all need help. The wages of sin is death, and we can see that in society when people sin death happens. Jesus came and took all that into his own body. That is why the cross is the most famous logo in world history. Then, on Easter Sunday he rose back to life and defeated death. He's alive today so you can have a relationship with him. **How did Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection free us from sin and death?**