

What If There Had Been No Easter?

1 Corinthians 15:12-20

Introduction: There is an absurd and unthinkable question: *What if there had been no Easter?* After Jesus Christ was crucified, He was in the tomb for three days and three nights; and then He rose from the grave, conquering sin and death. If Jesus had not risen from the dead, six tragic things would then be true.

1. Preaching Would Be Profitless
2. Faith Would Be Foolish
3. The Disciples Would Be Deceivers
4. Sin Would Be Sovereign
5. Death Would Have Dominion

1. PREACHING WOULD BE PROFITLESS (1 Cor. 15:14)

If Christ is still in the grave, then preaching is an exercise in futility.

2. FAITH WOULD BE FOOLISH (1 Cor. 15:14)

Faith is no better than its object.

Our faith in Jesus Christ is not worth anything if Jesus Christ is still in the grave.

We know that Jesus is the Son of God because of His resurrection. Romans 1:4

3. THE DISCIPLES WOULD BE DECEIVERS (1 Cor. 15:15-16)

If Jesus is still in the grave, then the disciples would have been false witnesses. The disciples were tortured, persecuted, and died as martyrs. A man may live for a lie; but few, if any, will die for a lie. Hypocrites and martyrs are not made of the same stuff.

4. SIN WOULD BE SOVEREIGN (1 Cor.15:17)

We are all sinners by birth, by nature, by practice, and by choice.

If Jesus is still in the grave, then we have no hope of forgiveness.

God cannot simply overlook sin. If God were to cease to judge sin, then God would cease to be holy.

If Jesus is still in the grave, then that would mean that God did not accept the sacrifice of Calvary. But we know that God did accept the sacrifice of Calvary because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Romans 4:25 / Romans 6:23 / Ezekiel 18:20

5. DEATH WOULD HAVE DOMINION (1 Cor.15:18)

If Jesus is still in the grave, then death would have dominion.

Because Jesus, in the form of a man, came to this earth, grappled with the iron bars of death, and rose from the grave, then we, too, can have victory over death.

6. THE FUTURE WOULD BE FEARFUL (1 Cor.15:19)

Someone once said, *"If Jesus Christ is still in that grave, nothing really matters. But if Jesus Christ came out of that grave, nothing but that really matters."*

Without the resurrection, we would be of all men most miserable. Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have a hope for the future that is steadfast and sure.

Conclusion: Because Jesus Christ rose from the dead, things have changed.... NOW...

1. Preaching Is Profitable.
2. Faith Is Feasible.
3. The Disciples Are Dependable.
4. Sin Has Been Subdued.
5. Death Has Been Defeated.
6. The Future Is Fabulous.

Do you know Jesus Christ?

What If There Had Been No Easter?

It's an unthinkable question: What if there had been no Easter? What if death had conquered and Jesus Christ stayed in the tomb?

Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

There are **six tragic things** that would be true if Christ is still in that grave.

1. Preaching Would Be Profitless

"And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain."

If Christ is still in the grave, you're wasting your time; I'm wasting mine. Preaching would be profitless, vain and empty.

"This is the gospel, that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried and rose again the third day..." (v. 4).

Without that, there is no gospel to preach.

2. Faith Would Be Foolish

Faith is no better than its object. Why put faith in a dead Messiah? A dead man can't save anyone. Our faith in Jesus Christ is worthless if He is still in the grave.

But He is shown to be *"the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead"* (Romans 1:4). Confucius died; he's dead. Buddha died; he's dead. Mohammad died; he's dead. Jesus Christ is alive. But if He's still in the grave, faith is foolish.

3. The Disciples Are Deceivers

Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God... (v. 15)

Paul is not saying *"We're mistaken."* It's one thing to be mistaken; it's another to be a false witness. Paul asserts, "If Jesus Christ is still in the grave, then *we're telling a lie*."

Were the disciples liars? If so, why would they lie? The disciples openly exclaimed, "Listen, we have seen Him! We have touched Him!" And they died as martyrs: tortured, persecuted, burned at the stake, torn apart by lions. Hypocrites and martyrs are not made of the same stuff. People tell lies to get out of trouble, not into trouble. Few will die for what they know is a lie.

Was Peter a con man, John the apostle a crook? Was Paul a known perjurer? If Christ is still in the grave, the disciples would be deceivers.

4. Sin Would Be Sovereign

"And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." (v. 17)

You have no hope of forgiveness apart from the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. If He is in the grave, then God did not accept the sacrifice of Calvary.

How do we know that Jesus Christ is not just a religious fanatic with a martyr complex who happened to get crucified? How do we know God accepted the sacrifice of Calvary? The resurrection. No resurrection, no Savior. No Savior, no forgiveness. His death without His resurrection cannot save anybody.

5. Death Has Dominion

"Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ have perished."

(v. 18)

Do you have a loved one who has died? If Jesus Christ be not raised, then they've perished. It is over. Life is nothing but a cruel joke. All we can look forward to is the downward spiral to the grave. No! Something as glorious as human life has more meaning than that. Those fallen asleep in Christ have not perished. The Lord Jesus Christ grappled with the iron bars of death and is victorious. Death does not have dominion! Christ arose!

6. The Future Is Fearful

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." (v. 19)

Without the resurrection, we're just poor, deluded fools, of all people most miserable. A wise man once said, "If Jesus Christ is still in that grave, nothing really matters. But if Jesus Christ came out of that grave, nothing but that really matters."

A Hope Steadfast and Sure

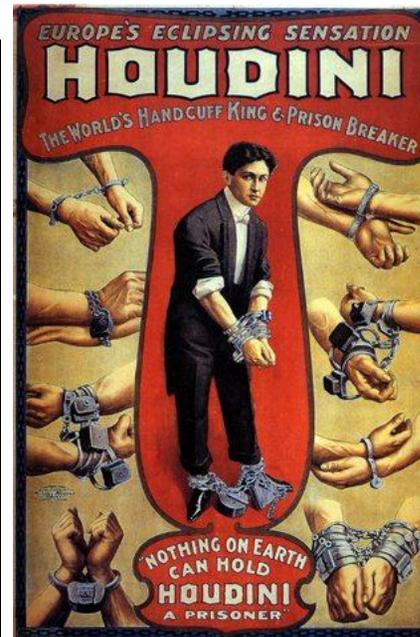
Jesus Christ took the sting out of sin, the dread out of death, the gloom out of the grave, and gave us a hope that is steadfast and sure. Preaching is profitable, faith is feasible, the disciples are

dependable, sin has been subdued, death has been defeated, and the future is fabulous...for we know where we're headed!

One of my favorite preachers of all time is Dr. Adrian Rogers. Though he walks the streets of gold today, his messages still speak to me. Below is an excerpt from one of his great sermons, "**What if there was no Easter?**"

Harry Houdini died in October of 1926. But, his claim to fame was that he was a magician who specialized in spectacular escapes. As a matter of fact, he was said to have laughed at locks and to have sneered at fetters. They said (of Harry) that he had the flexibility of an eel. He had the lives of a cat. They did all kinds of things to try to incarcerate him: they would seal him in coffins—he would escape; they riveted him into a boiler—he escaped; they sewed him up in canvas bags—he escaped; they locked him in a milk can—he escaped; they sealed him in a beer barrel—he escaped; they put him in maximum-security prison, and old Harry somehow got out. But then, in October 1926, Old Man Death laid his hands upon Harry Houdini and put him in a grave, and he has yet to escape. Houdini told his wife before he died, "If there is any way out, I will find it. If there is any way out, I'll make contact with you, and we'll do it on the anniversary of my death." For ten years she kept a light burning over his portrait. At the end of ten years she turned out the light. Death had Harry, and he couldn't escape.

Death laid his hands on the Lord Jesus Christ, also. And, Death put Jesus in a rock hewn tomb. And, there was a stone in the mouth of that tomb, and the seal of the Roman government was placed upon that tomb. But, on the third day, Jesus Christ stirred Himself. He rose from the sleep of death. And, He left those grave clothes that were wrapped around him like a butterfly



would forsake a cocoon. And, Jesus Christ passed through the walls of that rock hewn tomb. By the way, the stone wasn't rolled away to let Jesus out—it was rolled away to let the disciples in to see that Jesus had come back.

And Jesus Christ is alive. He is not behind us in a tomb. He is before us on a throne. But, I want to ask you a question: Suppose that had

not happened...suppose Death still held Jesus like it does Harry...then what? Suppose there had been no Easter?

Dr. Rogers answered his own question in the following outline taken from 1 Corinthians 15:12-21.

- I. Preaching Would Be Profitless**
- II. Faith Would Be Foolish**
- III. The Disciples Would Be Deceivers**
- IV. Sin Would Be Sovereign**
- V. Death Would Have Dominion**

Here's how Dr. Rogers concluded the message...

Years ago, I heard a fable about a spider who saw a great massive lion go into a cave. The spider was envious of the great

King of the Jungle, and the spider said to himself, "I will imprison that lion—that beast—in this cave." So, while the lion was asleep in the cave, the spider began to spin a web across the mouth of that cave. Back and forth, and up and down, he spun and spun and spun until he almost spun himself away. And then, the little spider sat down by the side of the tomb—by the side of that cave, as it was—and said, "Now, the mighty beast is my prisoner. No longer will he seek his prey in the dark of the night in the jungle. No longer will he bask in the golden sunlight. Now, I have taken him captive. He is my slave."

But, the old lion awoke from his nap, shook the dust from his mane, gave a yawn, stretched himself, and then let out a roar that echoed through the valley and over the hill. Then, he walked out of that cave and never even knew that the spider's web was there. Infidelity and hate wove a web of unbelief across the tomb of our Savior Jesus Christ. But, the Lion of the tribe of Judah has risen from the dead, and he's never even known that the devil's flimsy web was there. Jesus is alive. He's alive, and He lives in my heart.

Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;
Buried, He carried my sins far away;
Rising, He justified, freely forever;
One day He's coming—O glorious day!
~ J. Wilburn Chapman, 1911

Thank God, there was an Easter!!