

EASTER SERVICE – EGGCITED - 12 APRIL 2009

“But God...even when we were dead...made us alive”
[Ephesians 2:4,5]

Well, are **you excited** this morning? Are you like the **little chick** in the card on your seat, excited about a **new life**? Whatever kind of life the chick had in the shell, he **appears** to be **looking forward** to his **new life** outside the shell! And that is very much like what being ‘made alive in Christ’ is like. It is very like what is known as **conversion** – a new exciting life!

If we **really understood** what Easter means, ie, the **resurrection** of Jesus, we **would** be **excited** about the new life that Jesus brings into our world. I don’t know what **you** think of Easter, but most people today usually think of either, school holidays, chocolate eggs, bunnies, hot cross buns, or even little chicks!! All these things **symbolise** our **drift away** from the real meaning of Easter. Easter is a lot more than that.

Easter celebrations **should thrill** us! Although the original Good Friday was **tragic** (the terrible unjust murdering of Jesus), the grief all **evaporated** on the Sunday because of the **resurrection**! I don’t believe people **think** nearly enough about X’s resurrection – and what it really means for us today! (Not 1 programme on the Resurrection on any of 5 terrestrial channels on TV on Friday! Used to be 3hr long films + Readings of NT)

There was a man with Jesus on the night He died. He was **scared stiff he would be **taken into custody** along with Jesus! He **lied** his way out of **capture**. Afterwards, he really regretted his **cowardice** and wrote a long letter to his Xn friends escaped the persecution of Xns and found **asylum** in other parts of the world. This is what he said: *“**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be **born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the **dead**”*** [1 Pet 1:3] He

wanted to praise God for **causing** him to be **born again** with His new life through the resurrection of Jesus!

That man, Peter, believed that **we** today could get new life through the resurrection of Jesus! He **wept** and **wept** over his behaviour on the night Jesus died! *I believe that if Peter had **only known** that Jesus would have been resurrected, he would only be **too willing** to **surrender himself** to the authorities! Peter was a brave man, he was no wimp – but he blew hot and cold. He was easily **excited** and easily **depressed**. That was his nature. But Peter ran away and hid from the authorities. But he eventually **did surrender** himself to be crucified when his time came – Peter was crucified **upside down!**

How did Peter surrender himself this time, and not the first time? The answer: because of the **resurrection!** He met and spoke and had **fellowship** with Jesus after His death and resurrection. And that **strengthened** him **enormously!** That gave him new life! That still happens today – people **do** get new life through their faith in the resurrection of Jesus. The columnist A N Wilson in the **Daily Mail** yesterday wrote of his ‘conversion’ from being an atheist to a believer. Over the years reading the Easter Story convinced him of the reality of the resurrection. He is no longer ‘cowed’ by the secularists, which he himself once was. He is not threatened by the ‘sneering **Polly Toynbee**’, **Richard Dawkins**, and the ‘foul-mouthed’ self-satisfied TV presenters **Jonathan Ross & Russell Brand**, and the smug tieless **architects of so much television output.**’ He saw the resurrection ‘changes people’s lives’, He added ‘In the past I have questioned its veracity and suggested it should not be taken literally. But the more I read the Easter story, the better it seems to **fit and apply to the human condition**. That too (along with the other reasons), is why I believe in it.’

There **is** such a thing as “*the **power** of the **resurrection***” [Phi 3:10] That is what helped the early Xns to spread the gospel

“with **great power** the apostles were giving their **testimony to the resurrection** of the Lord Jesus”[Act4:33] It was because they had this new life in Christ. It is real.

What enabled Paul to fulfil his **one great ambition**. Paul had one great ambition. “**One thing I do...I press toward** (Gr=strive for) **the goal for the prize of the upward call of God**”? It was this: “**I count everything as loss...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection**”[Phil 3:8-12] Paul **knew** that there was something special about believing in the resurrection of X.

APP The big question is: Do **you** know this power? Does it **excite** you? Is it **meaningless** to you? Does Easter come and go without **you** in any way being affected? These early Xns gave their lives, 100s of them, because they could **not deny** X rose from the dead. 500 people saw Jesus after He rose at one time. Paul says “**He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive**”[1Cor 15:6]

Peter **wept** and **wept** over his behaviour on the night Jesus died! If he had **only known** what was to happen on the Sunday! But Peter **didn't know** there was to be a resurrection! But - he **should** have known, because Jesus **told** him and the rest of the disciples, **three** times, He was going to die and be **raised** in three days! But Peter and the disciples had a **mindset** which could **not absorb** such an idea to befall their Hero! The reason the disciples were taken by surprise, **both** by the death **and** resurrection of Jesus, was **not** because they were not told, but because of their **mindset!** **Everyone** has a **mindset** about life and reality! We come into the world with a **prejudice** in our minds regarding God. That is why the Bible says that before God changes us, we are “**hostile in mind**”[Col 1:21] and that is why Paul on several occasions says we must be “**renewed in the spirit of (our) minds**”[Eph 4:23 and Rom 12:2] We are told to “**set our minds on things above**”[Col 3:2] and “**prepare your minds for action**”[1 Pet 1:13]! We are **born** with a mindset!

That **raises** two important points. **One:** We need to **learn** and **hear** about the new life in Christ. We do not come into the world with this knowledge! We are **born in sin** and shaped in iniquity **without any clue** about truth! Even covenant children – that is why they have to be **taught** the truth! We are **born** with a prejudiced and distorted view of God. Paul says we are *“depraved in mind and deprived of the truth”* [1Tim 6:5]!

APP Thus the Church is under **obligation** to spread the Word as much as possible. Jesus said *“Go into the world and preach the gospel”*! Tell them Jesus died for sinners and invites all...!

Second: We **can** know the truth – but either **not understand** it or **not believe** it! Peter and all the disciples **heard** about the resurrection from Jesus – but their **minds** did not grasp it! You can be under the preaching of the Word even for years, and not grasp it! You can be **hearing** and not **listening**! Paul wrote:

*“The natural person does **not** accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is **not able** to **understand** them because they are spiritually discerned”* [1 Cor 2:14] The **answer:** we need God to ‘**make us alive**’!

It was on one of those occasions when Jesus told His disciples about his death and resurrection, that Luke wrote this: *“But they **understood none** of these things. This saying was **hidden** from them, and they did **not grasp** what was said”* [Luke 18:34]

It is amazing to read when Christ Himself was addressing a crowd, **after** the resurrection, *“And when they saw Him they worshiped him, but some **doubted**”* [Mat 28:17]

We also **can** understand it - but **deliberately refuse** to believe it! Many people regularly hear and understand the gospel but do not believe it. It neither affects them nor disturbs them in any way. That is why we need to be **made alive** by the **power of God**! We need **new life** – completely new! **APP** Why do you **not** begin **asking** God to make you alive in Christ. *“But **God**...even when we were **dead**... **made us alive**”*!