

Surprise!

Easter - 2024

Today, I'm going to tell you about a sweet surprise that changed our world forever. It happened on a day we call Easter. To fully understand this surprise, we must talk about...

What happened on Good Friday?

- Jesus died for our sins.

"When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners." (Romans 5:6–8, NLT)

Jesus died for our sins. He was pierced for our rebellion and crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be made whole and whipped so we could be healed. On Good Friday, God the Father laid our sins on His sinless Son (Isaiah 53:5-6; 2 Cor 5:21).

- Jesus was buried in a borrowed tomb.

All four Gospels tell us that a rich man named Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for Jesus' lifeless body (Matt 57-61; Mk 15:42-47; Lk 23:50-56; Jn 19:38-42). Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin - Israel's high council, and a secret follower of Christ.

What happened on Sad Saturday?

- Jesus' body remained in the sealed tomb.

Early Saturday morning on the Jewish Sabbath, the leading priests and Pharisees went to Pilate and asked him to put a guard in front of Jesus' tomb. The men were afraid that Jesus' disciples would steal his body and say he had risen from the dead (Matt 27:62-66).

- Jesus' disciples remained behind locked doors.

The disciples remained indoors from Friday to Saturday's sunset, observing the mandatory Sabbath rest and mourning the loss of their leader and friend. Jesus was dead, and they felt lost, lonely, and empty.

What happened on Easter Sunday?

- Jesus' followers were surprised to find the tomb empty.

But very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. They found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. So they went in, but they didn't find the body of the Lord Jesus. As they stood there puzzled, two men suddenly appeared to them, clothed in dazzling robes. The women were terrified and bowed with their faces to the ground. Then the men asked, "Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive? He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Remember what he told you back in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and that he would rise again on the third day." Then they remembered that he had said this. So they rushed back from the tomb to tell his eleven disciples—and everyone else—what had happened. (Luke 24:1–9, NLT)

- Jesus' followers were surprised to see the risen Lord.

First, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and then to the other females who faithfully followed Him (John 20:11-18; Luke 24:10). Then, Jesus appeared to Peter and two men on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-34; 1 Cor 15:5). Jesus appeared to His disciples (minus Thomas) on Easter evening (John 20:19-23). Then, over the next forty days, Jesus met with hundreds of his followers.

"...Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then, he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him..." (1 Corinthians 15:3-8, NLT)

Christianity quickly spread throughout the world, not because Jesus' followers said He had risen from the dead. Christianity spread around the world because Jesus' followers saw the risen Lord and were forever changed by Him (1 Cor 15:20-22)!

What did the risen Lord give to His followers on Easter?

1st - The risen Lord gave His followers peace.

2nd - The risen Lord gave His followers the power to resist temptation and endure trials.

3rd - The risen Lord gave His followers the promise of eternal life.