



The Resurrection: Reason To Rejoice

Pastor Eddie Idefonso

I remember several years ago standing behind the curtain during our church's Passion Play. At the end of each performance, the Assistant Pastor Bob de la Peña would step out and explain how to be saved by trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior. Onstage, Jesus had just risen, and the disciples were running back to look inside the tomb. I got so caught up in their excitement that for a brief moment, I wanted to go out on stage amidst all those characters dressed like people two thousand years ago, so that I could look inside with them and see the empty tomb.



People ask why we celebrate the Resurrection. The main reason is that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, is alive. No other religious leader who ever lived and died can make that claim. For that matter, every single leader or celebrity who has died—political, academic, or artistic—remains buried, unless his or her body has somehow been removed by man. Their tombs are often honored as places of national or religious pride.

But of what do we Christians boast? We boast of an empty tomb because the Person we love, the Person we follow, the Person we serve is no longer there.

Now, if Jesus Christ rose from the dead, where is He? Scripture tells us precisely where He is: He is seated at the right hand of God ([Hebrews 10:12](#)). It also informs us exactly what He is doing: when we pray, He intercedes with the Father on our behalf ([Hebrews 7:25](#)). Moreover, we know from John 14 that Jesus is

preparing a place for you and me in heaven and that one day we will be with Him there. ([verses 2-3](#)) In the meantime, He is arranging all the events necessary for His return.

The Bible gives us more reasons to rejoice. According to [1 John 2:1-2](#), Jesus Christ is our advocate. You see, when the Son of God saved you and me, He knew we would not live perfect lives—He knew there would be times we would sin against Him. So He stands between us and the Father to present our case. This defense is based not merely upon our confession and repentance for the forgiveness of sin, but upon the fact that Jesus Himself laid down His life and paid our sin-debt in full. When He went to the cross, He died a substitutionary, sacrificial death on our behalf. So we can be absolutely confident that our sins are totally forgiven. Salvation has nothing to do with our behavior, but it has everything to do with the grace of God, the love of God, the goodness of God, the mercy of God, and the blood of Jesus Christ. Now that's cause for celebration!

What's more, we are eternally secure in our Lord. There's not a single verse anywhere in Scripture indicating we were saved only for a season. Notice what the Bible says: The Lord gives believers eternal life, and we will never perish ([John 10:28](#)); we are "sealed for the day of redemption," which means the ultimate day when God calls us home. ([Ephesians 4:30](#)) We are assured that no one can snatch us out of our heavenly Father's hand. ([John 10:27-30](#))

So let me ask you a question: Do you think you have the power to take anything out of the hand of Omnipotence? Once you've trusted

Jesus Christ as your Savior, you may have doubts or fears in your life. You may rebel and sin against Him. But that in no way means you have lost your salvation. If it did imply such a thing, what could God possibly have meant by “I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish”? (**John 10:28**) This isn’t license for sin; this is reason to rejoice, to praise God, to walk holy before Him, and to obey Him. If Jesus had not risen from the grave, we might have reason to doubt our eternal security, but the fact that He was resurrected settles once and for all the truth of everything He said as well as the guarantee of everything He promised.

When you and I trusted Jesus as our Savior, we didn’t just receive forgiveness of our sins; we received His very life. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is right now abiding inside of us (**John 15:4**) to help each believer live the Christian life. (**Galatians 2:20**) He promised that He would not leave us as orphans, fending for ourselves (**John 14:18**), but instead, He would send us another Helper—the Holy Spirit—who would be with us forever, dwelling not only with us, but in us. (**John 14:16-17**)

We receive another aspect of His life when we place our trust in Him: eternal life. That’s the difference between believers and unbelievers: the unbeliever has life on earth, but we who believe have life after death because we have Christ’s life. Jesus is, was, and always will be—He will live forever, and the eternal life He offers is likewise of infinite duration. In addition, He gives us the quality and nature of the life He Himself possesses—it is glorious, abundant, and indescribable. He has given us Himself.

So, if He has given us eternal life, will our bodies get old? Will our muscles weaken and our hair become gray? Yes, the body will change with time, but our soul and spirit will mature and become stronger. Scripture tells us that Christians are going to live forever, but not in their earthly bodies. Every single believer is going to experience a bodily

resurrection! We know this, not only because Christ Himself was resurrected, but also because He told us, “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day” (**John 6:39**). If you belong to Christ, you are going to experience a bodily, physical resurrection.

Why else do we celebrate? **Hebrews 9:27** says that “it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.” Every single person will one day stand in the presence of Jesus Christ to give an account for his or her life. Scripture speaks of two coming resurrections, the first being “unto life,” which guarantees reward to every believer. (**Revelation 20:6**) The other resurrection, which is reserved for all people who have rejected the Lord Jesus, is unto judgment and condemnation. It results in eternal separation from God, which the Bible calls the “second death.” (**Revelation 20:11-15**)

One other reason we celebrate is that the resurrection of Jesus Christ has given us a very definite purpose for being alive. He has saved us so that we could reflect His life in our work, our ways, our words, and our walk. That is why you and I are the body of Christ. He is looking through our eyes, hearing through our ears, speaking through our voices, and helping through our hands. Having created us for Himself, He desires that you and I walk in holiness and righteousness before Him. We are to be Christ’s representatives, pointing people to Him and reflecting His light to a dark world that desperately needs Him.

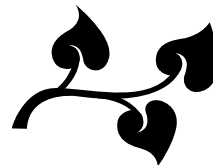
To all of us who know Him as personal Savior, He has entrusted the most awesome and glorious message, unmatched by anything else in history. And that message is so simple: Our unconditionally loving heavenly Father sent His only begotten Son Jesus into this wicked, vile, sinful world to die on a cruel Roman cross. There, Christ paid the sin-debt of all mankind in order

to reconcile us unto God and make us His children. When you by faith receive Him as your personal Savior, your eternal destiny is transformed in a split second—one moment lost; the next moment saved. Formerly headed for hell; now with a home in heaven.

Every once in a while I hear somebody casually say, “Well I guess I’m just going to hell when I die.” No one in his right mind should speak so carelessly! Everyone is going to spend eternity in either heaven or hell—there is no escape. No disintegration. No annihilation. There is not a single verse of Scripture that says you can become nothing once you have been born. Let me say this: It would be better never to have been born than to die without Christ!

So why do we celebrate the Resurrection? Because it is all about assurance, confidence, and boldness. It’s about where we are in life, where we are headed, and where we are going to end up—in the very presence of the living God instead of eternally separated from Him.

Revelation 21:27 says that no one can enter heaven except “those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” How do you get your name inscribed in that book? By accepting the Lamb of God—the person of Jesus Christ—as your personal Savior, based on the fact that He died on the Cross, paying your sin-debt in full. Three days after He was buried, He rose again. Believe it . . . and celebrate!



Youth Exchange

Spring has sprung again in Los Angeles! This time of the year is either dreaded or as highly anticipated as wintertime in Alaska.

In L.A., the coming of Spring means that everything starts looking all peachy and fresh and people have a sunnier disposition. The birds are singing and the flowers are filling the air with the smells of the new season.

For kids, it's also a time of getting out and enjoying all that L.A. has to offer. For most of our kids, the world outside seems like a frontier with no boundaries. They are not about to let all the cares and responsibilities of life get in the way of their getting the maximum amount of fun out of every experience.

It's a time of building new friendships, planning for getting a summer job or getting into some sporting or artistic activity. This is also a time filled with out of

control hormones and much mischief that many times goes on right under the noses of unnoticing parents.

For over the past ten years, I have been involved with youth ministry, both in various churches and in the California juvenile prison system and I've had the opportunity to see many things. I've seen kids both succeed and fail in the areas of becoming responsible, contributing members of their families, churches and communities.

I have had a unique opportunity to gain a broad perspective into the lives of young people from all walks of life. You tend to see the threads of culture and life style that run throughout their lives and you start to see patterns that make up either a successful young person or a troubled youth. In speaking to many young people who have not experienced having been locked up in a prison camp or jail facility, I remind them that the only difference from some of them and those we meet in jail is that they just haven't been caught yet. That is a sad and sobering

thought for many of our young people and also for their parents.

It's a very true fact that our children, many times, walk a very thin line between living an upright life or a life of crime. In both situations, my plea goes to the parents. To those parents whose children are making the right decisions in their lives, I want to say **do not grow weary of doing the good work of raising and guiding your children.** And to the parents who have kept too loose of an accountability structure for their children, for whatever reason, I can only say **keep praying for your children because they may have to lose everything, including their freedom, in order to gain back control of their lives.**

In the next article I will discuss Kids and Boundaries: the differing levels of a child's falling away into street life.

Thanks and keep praying for the children,

~ Phil J. Burno

Email: admin@wla1wcc.org

English

Worship Service:
Sunday 10:30 a.m.
Bible Study:
Monday 7:30 p.m.

Spanish

Worship Service:
Sunday 8:00 a.m.
Bible Study:
Friday 7:30 p.m.

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UP-COMING MINISTRY OUTREACH

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| Youth Prison Ministry—Phil Burno | April 29 | Sylmar, CA |
| Los Angeles Mission - Phil Burno | April 14 & 28 | |

2006 MISSION TRIPS

Please pray for God’s guidance, provisions and protection for these trips.

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| *PTS | Pastor Eddie | Apr. 17-21 | Tegucigalpa, Honduras |
| *PTS | Pastor Eddie | May 1-11 | Timisoara, Romania |
| *PTS | Pastor Eddie | Aug. 10-21 | Ghana, Africa |
| | Women’s Conference | Aug. 13-19 | Tegucigalpa, Honduras |
| *PTS | Pastor Eddie | Sep. 9-18 | Zimbabwe, Africa |
| *PTS | Pastor Eddie | Nov 27-Dec 1 | Tegucigalpa, Honduras |

***PTS = Pastor’s Training School with Covington Seminary Extension**