

E A S T E R



Invitation to Believe

As another passover approached, Jesus' performance of miraculous signs began to attract many followers. Though his disciples expected him to capitalize on this momentum by declaring himself king and finally delivering the Jewish people from the bondage of the Roman Empire, Jesus opted instead to simply share an intimate meal with his followers, telling them that rather than leading a revolt, he would lay his life down in love for the world. Proceeding at a rapid pace after his betrayal, Jesus' arrest and execution turned the celebratory Passover mood into a weekend of horrors. And just as the bleakness of mourning overtook his followers, Jesus performed one final sign pointing to his true identity as God in human form by walking out of the tomb to share breakfast with his friends on the beach.

Start Talking

Theological significance aside, where does Easter rank in your list of favorite holidays? Why?

Have you ever had a holiday week that didn't go according to plan? What happened?

Looking Back

Last week we discussed the fact that the presence of God does not necessarily bring the immediate removal of all suffering. With that in mind, how did this week go?

Did you find yourself comforted during any problematic situations? When was it difficult to believe that suffering has a purpose?

What About You?

1. Put yourself in the mindset of the disciples immediately after Jesus' healing of Lazarus. What is your mood like? What are your expectations for Jesus' life and ministry?
2. Likewise, what is your thought process as Jesus' work is seemingly cut short by his arrest and execution?



3. Has anything like this ever happened in your own experience— have you ever found yourself in circumstances where God seems to be allowing the worst possible scenario to play out, contrary to what seems best?

Look It Up

Read the Following Passages: John 19: 16-42, 20: 2-8, 24-31

1. In light of the “New Covenant” and “New Command,” Jesus shared with his friends during their last meal together, what do you think the crucifixion of Jesus’ represents?
2. Why do you think Peter and John run to the tomb when Mary tells them she can’t find Jesus’ body? What were they expecting?
3. Thomas’ reluctance to believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead has been immortalized in our own culture through the phrase, “Doubting Thomas.” What do you make of Thomas’ reaction here. Do you find it reasonable, given the circumstances? Or does it strike you as unreasonably skeptical?
4. How does Jesus’ statement about those who have not seen, and yet still believe make you feel?
5. John plainly states that he recorded the miraculous signs he saw so that we may believe Jesus was God. Do you think “belief” here refers to mere intellectual agreement with a certain set of facts? How would you define the term?

Putting It All Together

6. In the days preceding and following the execution of Jesus, we see his followers rocked by every conceivable variation in human emotion. What can we learn about navigating the lowest— and most celebratory— moments from this record of human experience?
7. What implications does the resurrection of Jesus have for our own lives? How does it impact our seasons of suffering? Our seasons of joy?
8. If belief in the identity and resurrection of Jesus implies more than mere agreement with a few theological ideas, how should our daily lives change in the aftermath of a risen God?
9. Despite his status of equality with God, Jesus chose not to leverage his power to benefit himself, but instead willingly underwent the most public, humiliating death imaginable in order to benefit the very people who killed him. What would it look like in your own life to live out the ethic Jesus exemplified here? What are a couple of situations in which you could begin to follow his example?

