

## Jesus Engages My Doubts

✦ To give me proof. (vv.14a, 22-28)

✦ To give me peace. (vv. 29-32)

**Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

So now what do you do with Easter?

We're not talking about the ones who only came for the pretty in pink, pastels. You know, the Easter bunny and all the candy? Little Bunny Frou-Frou didn't really know what all those eggs were for anyway as he was "hopping through the forest, scoopin' up the field mice and boppin 'em on the head." The good fairy only came down in the children's song until it died out. They opted for the Easter fairytale.

But this is about those who came sincerely hoping for help and healing at Easter. You know, "Could this man Jesus maybe help me too?" Possibly they had every intention of coming back, but then the old life gets busy again. Not outright rejection of Easter, more like the "frog in the kettle syndrome." Just warm at first for the frog...swimming around...warmer...warmer...until no energy...death.

Some never realize how dangerous Easter is until it's too late. Years later Jesus warned through Peter in his second letter, "*Indeed, if, after escaping the defiling things of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and controlled by them again, they are worse off than they were at first.*" (2 Peter 2:20 EHV)

We're talking about us who do come back. What do you do with Easter? How can you hang on to the greatest truth ever told? When your eyes see nothing, but doubts and fears wander at night like so many sheep that refuse to lie down and rest? Maybe a better question is what does Jesus do with Easter? To strengthen my grateful praise, no scolding, **Jesus Engages My Doubts - To give me peace**, but first...

✦ **To give me proof. (vv.14a, 22-28)**

You know what the guards did with Easter. They ran away from the tomb and let the Jewish religious leaders pay them to say the disciples stole Jesus' body. Pontius Pilate kept getting into more trouble with Rome until according to tradition Pilate drown himself in a dismal lake in Italy. Seven weeks after Easter there were pilgrims in Jerusalem at Pentecost. God gave them Easter in Peter's sermon.

Talk about getting people's attention! They were "*cut to the heart*" by Peter's Pentecost sermon, really hurting as Peter told them they had crucified their own Messiah. Our foolish pride needs that cutting too! Our stubborn refusal to believe God's Word, to trust without anxiety and worry, to boldly stand up for Jesus and confess our faith freely – all these are sins that crucified Him too. Now Peter needed to show them and us what God did to save us from such crimes against God and humanity.

Peter's fellow Jews, the *men of Israel*, had all heard about *Jesus the Nazarene*. What many of them didn't know is that the crucified rabbi was also certified, *recommended by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did through him* among the Jews. John writes in the last verse of his Gospel account: "*Jesus also did many other things. If every one of them were written down, I suppose the world itself would not have room for the books that would be written.*" (21:25) "*But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*" (20:31) *Miracles* were power works no one else could do. *Wonders* were absolutely amazing. *Signs* pointed to Someone greater than all. In fact, the greatest sign is God's own Son taking on human flesh and blood through the womb of the Virgin Mary. Jesus came to live and die and live again for all.

Despite the critics, it's undeniable. God gave His own prognosis for sinners who rebelled to be delivered from self-destruction through the sacrifice of Christ. Detailed 1000 years before Christ – Psalm 22; Isaiah 53 – the Messiah would be crucified by lawless men, nailed to a cross. God's plan would bring a new beginning. So Peter here and Paul in his sermons, liked to quote the ancient Psalm 16. King David wrote about Jesus and His resurrection: ***“I saw the Lord always before me because he is at my right hand I will not be shaken therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoiced my flesh also will rest in hope because you will not abandon my life to the grave nor will you let your holy one see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life you will fill me with joy in your presence.”***

This blessed assurance is unique to Christianity. All the world's religions seek to appease the foggy idea of god, imagined by man. One Chinese girl described her view of god under Confucianism in the most horrid, yet natural terms. She pictured herself at the bottom of a deep well with god leaning over the edge, silhouetted at the top. His voice was crushing her so far below: “You got yourself into this, now get yourself out of it.” Instead, the God of the Bible sent Jesus down into the deep, dark well of earthly life to walk among us all the way to the cross. God's mercy in Christ-crucified and risen lifts us out of depression and despair. The American “pull-yourself-up-by-the bootstraps” mentality doesn't help. The Lord God helps those who *cannot* help themselves. Only God's grace in Christ teaches us to admit our need and accept His kindly love and deliverance, even from troubles of our own making. **Jesus Engages My Doubts – To give me proof** in many prophecies, and then...

### ✠ **To give me peace. (vv. 29-32)**

One thing that bothers people with weak faith is the gruesome appearance of dead bodies. Zombie movies can only entertain so long before reality sets in. Some think it would be easier if their body were like the body Christ after only three days and no decay. So hearing about King David can actually help.

Peter noted that everyone knew King David died and the location of His tomb right there in Jerusalem to this day. But as Peter says David was a prophet who repeated God's oath that a descendant of David would someday sit on his throne (Psalm 132:11), die, then rise again with his flesh never seeing decay. As a prophet, David could see all this coming, how our guilt would be relieved by Easter.

***“This Jesus is the one God raised up.”*** Peter asserts about himself and the apostles: ***“We are witnesses of that.”*** Eventually all the apostles would go out into the world to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus to everyone. All they received in return was persecution and death for all but John. No riches, no land, no power – no worldly wealth would come to them through the Easter message – only Christ.

The Holy Spirit still produces in our body, soul and spirit the *full enjoyment of God's blessings* as Jesus says in the Good Shepherd Chapter: ***“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*** (John 10:10) Or as we would say, “Life to the max.” In heaven just the sight of Jesus' face will be enough to fill us with overflowing ecstasy and everlasting joy. ***For the God who said, “Light will shine out of darkness,” is the same one who made light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God”*** literally, ***“in the face of Jesus Christ.”*** (2 Corinthians 4:6 EHV)

**Jesus Engages My Doubts – To give me peace** to share with you through those ancient prophecies that prove how much He loves you and me. Thomas was invited by Jesus to touch the nail marks and put his hand in Jesus' side – if that's what he needed to believe. But Jesus also said for us, ***“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*** (John 20:29)

What do you do with Easter? God gets graphic in Psalm 131: ***“I have soothed and quieted my soul. As a nursed child rests with its mother, like a nursed child my soul rests with me. Wait confidently, O Israel, for the LORD from now to eternity.”*** Hang on to Easter like a baby at her mother's breast. Then when you fall asleep in Jesus, you'll wake up in glory and realize God was holding you close all along, like a mother with her baby. ***Peace be with you!*** Amen.