

# The true meaning of Easter

Dan Nelson - pastor

Calvary Chapel of the Ojai Valley

Easter is a time full of family visits, traditions and travel schedules, festive meals and fond memories. Decorated egg hunts; chocolate bunnies and marshmallow treats have always been part of the fun for me. Looking back upon my childhood experiences, this has been one of my favorite holidays for as long as I can remember. Easter season created some of my most precious memories. The baskets, candy and games were just the beginning. The anticipation that led up to Easter morning began with the sheer excitement of having a week off school. That was when schools still offered "Easter Vacation" before they decided to secularize the terminology with our more recent "Spring Break" and distance it from the Holy Day. (Yes, I did say "Holy Day" for that is what "holiday" means.) I will never forget sitting at the kitchen table with mom, a dozen hardboiled eggs, and the smell of vinegar and coloring solution in our dipping bowls and on our fingers. We were always brought to church on Easter morning to be reminded of the real meaning of the day.

So what does this weekend mean to you? Many people refer to this week as Holy Week or Passion Week, which started with Palm Sunday last weekend and culminates this Sunday on Easter. The week was full of excitement and treachery, the height of human foolishness and the depths of depravity. The story unfolds like a well-written drama that is stranger than fiction. And it all happened; the proclamation by the multitudes of Jesus as king, the jealousies, the religious hypocrisies, the betrayal, the persuasion of the people by the silver-tongued snakes to mob against him, the illegal arrest, the denial by his trusted friends, the brutality and the blood, the nails, the cross, the sacrifice, the death, the burial, the resurrection.

Some people will miss it again. There are those who genuinely do not care nor have a desire to know. Most of them won't read this page. A few will.

Did you know that we have more historical evidence to prove the resurrection of Jesus Christ than we have to believe that Socrates, Plato or Aristotle ever existed? Did you know that there is more evidence to prove the authorship and accuracy of the Bible than that Shakespeare ever authored "Romeo and Juliet" or "Julius Caesar"?

So why does it matter if the story is true or not some ask? What is the real significance beyond the message simply to love one another? Everything! The Bible teaches that Jesus' death was a substitution for us; that our penalty was poured out upon him. If someone pays your biggest debt for you, what is the appropriate response? (Especially if that debt is one that you have no hope of ever satisfying on your own.) Jesus has purchased you and I out of slavery and given us an opportunity to real life. He said that this was his mission. But what if we are not interested in this new life in Jesus? Is it possible to be perfectly content remaining in the state of denial as though the job title, and bank account

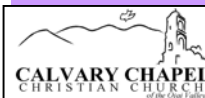
balance, and personal philosophies will bring something worthwhile? Many people think so and will pass through this weekend without a connection to Jesus once again.

But here is the rub. While Good Friday remembers Jesus' taking our place in punishment for our misdeeds, Sunday celebrates his triumph over death to be alive again. The Scriptures teach that this concept is "foolishness to those who are perishing." We just don't see this happening today, or any day. But really, that is the point! Jesus is the Christ, unique in all the universe, unlike any other religious figure, he is the "only begotten Son of God." The resurrection means that his death has significance not only in history but in our lives today. He is alive today to keep every promise and hear every prayer of those who call to him. Further, he is the ultimate judge over all things. Regardless of religious upbringing, cultural background, language or philosophical slant, we will all meet Jesus face-to-face one day. We will all receive his discerning judgment. Wouldn't you prefer to have been his friend?

Over the years I have changed some terminology that I use also. I now use the term "Resurrection Day" interchangeably with "Easter." This is a great reminder to what we are really celebrating; the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and the new life to all who follow him.

To read other articles by Pastor Dan visit [Ojai Valley News Articles](http://OjaiValleyNewsArticles)

Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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## **Sunday Worship:**

**9:00 & 10:45am**  
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
195 Mahoney Ave, Oak View

## **Mid-Week Study:**

**7:00pm Thursday**  
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

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