

# Easter Service (2012)

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 Audio Transcript of a Sunday Sermon

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**Summary:** *Great Power was released at Jesus Death & Resurrection. The veil in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked, the rocks (hard places) were split in two. The graves were opened. There was another greater (megas) earthquake. The stone was rolled back. Jesus arose from the dead, and many saints arose from the dead also.*

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*Sun 8 Apr 2012*

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I love Easter. Easter was the time of the year when I got filled with the Holy Ghost, filled with the power of God for the first time, baptised in the spirit down in Waikanae at a camp. I had an encounter with God that changed my life, and I want just to speak on the power of resurrection this morning briefly. You got a Bible - be great if you could open it.

I want to draw your attention to a couple of things that people don't notice, or don't realise, about Easter - what happened at the original time when Jesus died and rose from the dead. One of the things that we understand in the Christian faith, the great hope we have, is the resurrection. I don't know how people can live their life, not being sure where they're going, what's going to happen the other side of death, what's going to happen after you die. I don't know how people can live like that, without having the assurance that we have, as believers and followers in Christ, that there definitely is a resurrection. Death does not end it all.

Let's have a look, and I want to look at two scriptures, Matthew 27 and 28, and they describe what happened when Jesus died. We're not going to go to all of it. I just want to draw your attention to a couple of parts of it, firstly about Jesus' death, and so in Verse 50, Matthew 27 verse 50, and it said: Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit. Then behold the veil of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; the earth quaked, the rocks were split, the graves were opened; and many of the bodies of the Saints who'd fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, went into the Holy City and appeared to many. And the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and what happened, they were terribly frightened, they were greatly afraid, said: truly this is the Son of God.

The first thing I want to describe, just to talk to you a little bit about Jesus' death. Many have seen the film "The Passion of the Christ", so you understand the horrors of how Jesus was put to death, and I want you to notice something about His actual death on the cross. The Bible says that: He cried with a loud voice. In other words, He shouted out! Now I've been with many people who died. You know what one thing is common with all of them, apart from the fact they died was this: they died very quietly, very quietly. I've seen, and been with many people when they've died, and usually what happens is, their voice gets very, very quiet, because they have very little breath left; and then as they die, often the voice fades away completely. Then there's often a rattle, and they breathe their last breath. That's how many people that I've watched die, and that has been how they died. It's very, very quiet. Sometimes it was so quiet, you never heard a thing, just suddenly you were aware that they had gone.

But this is not so with Jesus. The Bible says, now you've got to understand he'd been whipped severely, scourged, the Crown of Thorns put on, nailed on the cross. He'd hung on the cross for three hours, from midday to 3.00pm, and right there - notice this - right there at the very time that the religious people who crucified Him were offering up the lamb, the Passover lamb, to offer a sacrifice for the sins of the nation, which was done once a year in memory of the original Passover; right there at that very point when they were doing that, the Bible says: Jesus shouted with a loud shout!

In other words, He gave a mighty victorious shout that He had won a great battle! He had won a great battle. It was a shout - when Jesus died, two things the Bible tells us: one, He shouted a shout of victory; and two, He let go His spirit. He let go. He gave up His life. It was never taken from Him. He had power to do that, something you and I don't have. So it was a shout of victory. Why was it a shout of victory? Because Jesus knew something, that no one else around there knew, and all the demonic powers did not know. If they'd known, they would never have crucified Him. He knew something they did not know. He knew that He was acting as a representative of all humanity; for centuries upon centuries upon centuries, thousands of years, people had been born, had lived and died; born, lived, died; generation after generation, suffering the impact of the first man's sin, and no one could do anything to stop it. When Jesus came, He came to represent what God is like, the love of God, and the heart of God. Then when He died on the cross, He took with Him to the cross our sins and failures. He also took to the cross the list of every fault and failure and sin that was listed against us.

The Bible says in Colossians 2:14, it says: He took the handwriting, the list of every law of God that we ever broke. He took the list of everyone, everything you've done in your past, have done today, will do later today, will do in the future - everything wrong in the whole span of your life, and the life of every other person; He took it all, and nailed it to the cross. And the Bible says in Colossians 2:14: when Jesus took that list and put it on the cross, He disarmed every principality and power. He took from the devil his power to hold you in bondage. If you're in bondage, it's your choice that's causing it. If you're in bondage, it's your beliefs that's causing it. If you're in bondage, it's your habits that's causing it. It's not because God hasn't made a way for you.

When Jesus died on the cross, the Bible says: He disarmed; He took away from every demon the right, the power, the authority, the privilege, the ability to oppress you with sickness, disease and torments. He disarmed them, literally took away their power, and you and I have to understand that's why He shouted out: great victory; because He knew in a moment of time, as He let go His life, He had represented humanity before God, and now He offered the sacrifice of His life; the devil's power to hold everyone in bondage was now broken. So His shout was a shout of victory.

Now we know not only that. We know that when God has his hand on something, He demonstrates it usually with some form of power manifestation. I want you to notice the things that happen, distinct things that happen, because most of us understand the cross. We don't understand the things that happened around it. Notice the first thing that happened was that the earth shook. There was a massive earthquake the moment Jesus died. That was not a coincidence. That was God - heaven was opening up, and God was saying: this sacrifice that Jesus has offered, on behalf of all men, is acceptable to me, and so He shook earth.

Now I don't know if you've been down in Christchurch, you know what earthquakes are like, but usually when you get a fairly massive earthquake, when you get a massive earthquake - people freak out. They freak out. They start screaming, running, yelling. Now this earthquake was strong enough to shatter rocks. It was big enough to shatter rocks. Now that's got to be a sizeable earthquake, to cause rocks to shatter. So I want you to picture yourself there, that Jesus - the Bible tells us there was a darkness over the land, an unusual darkness. There was no explanation for it. There was darkness over the land from 12 midday, the brightest time of the day normally; darkness, total darkness right over the land from 12 until 3.00pm; and then the moment Jesus died, immediately as He gave this great shout of victory over the devil, and all his works on behalf of man, God responded with a power demonstration from heaven, and four things happened; number one, there was a massive earthquake. Number two, it was so strong, that rocks just shattered and broke. I understand that the remains of some of those rocks are there to this day. The third thing that happened was, God took the temple veil, and He literally tore it - notice it says: from top to bottom, it was ripped open. Now the veil was a very, very thick curtain, that kept ordinary people out from the presence of God; and so in the temple, only a priest could go into the holy place once a year, and so at this time of the year, this very time, the priest would have gone in there to that holy place, to offer a sacrifice on behalf of the nation. Normally he would not be seen. No one would see. No one was allowed there. It was death to go there, and suddenly it's ripped completely open; and what had never been seen before, was seen. God was announcing to the world: by the death of my Son, I made it possible for every person to access me. Every person can have a relationship with God, through faith in Jesus Christ, and what He did. Every person can access the presence of God. Every person can come personally to God. There's no need for someone to come on our behalf.

The next thing you notice, and this is the unusual one, it tells us that the graves were opened. Now so when the earthquake came, not only did it shake the ground, and broke the rocks, but it also opened up graves. I don't know whether you've ever seen any open graves at all. They're not very nice! Now these are people who would have been entombed, and so there was a boulder over the tomb, and the boulder was rolled away or split or whatever, and the tomb was opened up. Or they were people who were in the ground, the ground just cracked open. Now have you ever seen when there's been a major damage in an

earthquake? They had a bit of it in Christchurch, where some of the graves had broken open, and the bones of people were actually visible. It's usually a shock and a horror when people see that kind of stuff, but this was widespread. Graves everywhere around that area opened up - and can you imagine what that's like, the fear that would have come upon people at that moment? Can you imagine the fear? Firstly the earthquake; secondly rocks around which are normally hard, shattering; and third, graves opening up, and you can see bodies! Now they're not in good shape. Most of them would just be bones. They'd be decayed away, and there's just fragments of bones, and its left open, just like that, all over the place - open graves.

So often these are the things that we don't see, so we don't read these aspects around the crucifixion. Now why is it that God did a thing like that? Firstly, the display of power is to demonstrate that His favour was on the offering that Jesus did. Second thing was, when He opened the grave, the Bible says: when we sin, the wages of sin is death. The consequence of sin is separation from God, ultimately physical death. Now what's happened is, at the death of Jesus Christ, suddenly all the graves are open, and God is putting on display: this is the consequence of sin. Horrible. No one wants to look at a grave, no one looks at the dead body, there, open in front of everyone, so everyone could see this is the consequence of sin. So Jesus declared: He'd won a victory over the devil. Very soon, He's going to demonstrate His power again, and He's going to get a victory over death, so I want you to read with me just another passage now.

So the first thing we see is, Jesus died on the cross, He won a victory, totally, over the devil; and made it possible for us to come near, personally access God. Here's the second thing we see then, the graves open, and the consequence of sin exposed. Now I want you to have a look at this - go into Matthew 28. Now after the Sabbath, this is the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. Now look at Verse 2. Many of you perhaps read it, and never noticed this: behold, there was a great earthquake, another earthquake, a second earthquake - so there were two earthquakes. There was an earthquake the moment Jesus died, God shook the ground like that, shook everyone up, and it was so scary that even toughened, hardened Roman soldiers were terrified, and knew it was the Son of God. It's definitely the Son of God! Now these guys had been campaign-hardened military men, and they were shaken to the core of their being with fear at what they saw, and acknowledged: this was truly the Son of God. They got saved right at that point.

Now I want you to see something else happens. Now, here it is, and we're back there, it's the third day of Jesus being dead, in the grave for three days, and it says: there was a great earthquake. Now that's not just an earthquake. This time it's a great earthquake, and the word that's used in the original language is 'mega'. There was a mega-quake! That's got to be pretty big, doesn't it? A mega-quake! There was a massive, massive earthquake, and then it says: an Angel

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