

Easter Explanations: What In Heaven's Name Is Going On?

Hillsboro Presbyterian Church

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Ephesians 3:2-6 (The Apostle Paul wrote) ***“God gave me the responsibility of bringing his grace to you. And God let me understand the mystery of His plan...”***

Have you ever seen the television show *Lost*? In *Lost* they explain the story line through flash backs and flash forwards. That is exactly what I want to do in this Easter message. We hear the good news “Christ is risen!” – but we might not understand what is going on, because we don’t know what led up to it from the past and we don’t know how it impacts the future. And since we don’t know the rest of the story, Easter doesn’t make sense. Why did Jesus have to die? What is the significance of Jesus coming back to life? And what does Easter have to do with my life today?

This Mystery of God’s Plan can be called The Mystery of History. Easter is actually Act Three in a five-act mystery. Easter occurs two thirds through the Bible...we need to see the whole. I want to give you the panorama of history; from the beginning of the universe to the end of time, and show you all five acts in God’s plan for the universe and God’s plan for you.

ACT ONE - GOD MADE IT ALL. Genesis 1:1 ***“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”*** God made the universe...most don’t have a problem with that. But why did God do it?

1) God made it all to reveal His glory...to show us what God is really like...who God is. We look at God’s creation and see that God is creative. God likes variety...every snowflake and person is different! God is organized...all things fit together, from atoms to galaxies. God is powerful...feel the ocean tide or the earth quake. God likes beauty... breathtaking views and striking colors. Psalms 19:1 says *“The heavens declare the glory of God.”* Albert Einstein said, “Science is thinking God’s thoughts after him.” Everything created reveals God’s glory.

2) God made it all to express his love. God made everything in the universe out of love.... every planet, every plant, every person. God loves you. 1 John 4:16 says *“God is love.”* Not that God has love, but that God IS love...the very source of love. The whole reason you are alive is that God made you to love you. God made us to love us so that we could live in His love and love others.

3) God made it all to form a family. James 1:18 (NLT) *“In his goodness, God chose to make us his own children by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his choice possession.”* God created a whole universe in order to create a family that He could love.

ACT TWO - HUMANS MESS IT ALL UP. Romans 3:23 ***“We’ve all sinned and proved that we are utterly incapable of living the glorious lives that God wills for us.”*** God put humans in a perfect environment. They called it the Garden of Eden and everything was great. No sorrow, no suffering, no sickness, no sadness. Adam and Eve in paradise. No in-laws. No distractions. No clothes. What a God! But here’s the thing. God wanted his children to be able to love him back. It’s not real love if you’re forced to love. Love is only love if you have a choice. The humans chose to disobey God. Their disobedience – our disobedience – changed our relationship with God, changed this world, and changed all humans. We can blame it on God’s adversary, but Adam and Eve made a choice...and we do too. This messed up world is our fault. Death, suffering, global warming, racism, violence, hopelessness, meaninglessness – these are the consequences of our messing it up.

ACT THREE – JESUS REDEEMS IT ALL. Romans 5:18:3 (NLT) ***“Christ’s one act of righteousness makes all people right in God’s sight and gives them life.”*** A lot of people have made history, but Jesus is the only one to *split* history. BC and AD. Every time you write the date 2010 – you are using Jesus Christ as the reference point. Because 2010 years ago God came to earth in the human, Jesus of Nazareth. If God had wanted to communicate to ants, he would have become an ant. But God wanted to communicate to His messed up, alienated children, so he became one of us. God came in Jesus, lived a perfect life in an imperfect world, and died on the cross in our place. And just as one person began the mess up, one person began the clean up. This is why the cross, a symbol of torture, became a symbol of hope. On the cross God shows how much He loves us and does for us what we can’t do for ourselves. Wipe our slate clean and change our very nature. So we can have Life as it was meant to be.

ACT FOUR – HERE WE ALL ARE. John 1:14 ***“Yet to all who receive Jesus, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”*** Now is our time in history ...which is really His-story. What is our part in his-story? Do we make a cameo appearance or do we become part of the cast? God has done absolutely everything necessary to get through to us. The wonders of creation. Your conscience to see there are rights and wrongs in this world. The cross of Christ reaching out to you. The gift of every day. The blessing of being born in this country. Your mind to seek Him. Your heart to receive His love. Your spirit that yearns to be alive. God has done it all...all we can do is simply receive and believe. It makes far more sense to believe God exists than God does not exist. It makes far more sense to believe that God would want to get through to us. Christianity makes all the sense in the world. But at some point your story must become part of God’s story for your story to have a happily ever after. Jesus Christ is how our life becomes eternal life...how our story becomes part of his-story...how we go from cameo to cast member.

ACT FIVE – THAT’S ALL, FOLKS! Ephesians 1:10 ***“This is God’s plan: At the right time, God will bring all things together under the authority of Christ- everything in heaven and on earth.”*** God has long range plans for you if you are a part of God’s People. Ephesians 3:21 says *“to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever.”* Nothing lasts forever, except for God’s Word and God’s People. At best, you are only going to spend 100 years on this planet...that is not very long compared to eternity. Live with the end in mind. What is it going to be like in eternity with God’s forever family? 1 Corinthians 2:9 says *“No eye can see, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.”* It’s going to be in a perfect place. It will be much cooler than Avatar! So when is the right time when God will do all this? Jesus said in Matthew 24:36 *“No man knows about that day or hour.”* So live as if it could be at any time.

On that day earth’s story is over...when this 5 Act Mystery of History comes to a close...when they roll the final credits...will your name be there? Friends, because of Easter, your name can be there.

Your life was made for a bigger purpose than you ever imagined. We were made to be a part of God’s story and God’s plan. If you are living simply for yourself, for the here and the now, you are making a fatal mistake. Life is not about you. Life is all about God. I urge you get to know Jesus...

get to know and love God who wants you as His child. Just say: Dear God, thank You for creating me...for loving me...for sending Jesus for me. Forgive me. I confess Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. God, I want to starting living life as you intended...and be in Your family forever. Amen.