

**Easter Reflections in Ghana**  
**A Bible Message by Bayless Conley**  
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Today's message will be a little bit unique for several reasons. Number one, it is Easter, so we will be talking about Easter, about the Resurrection of our Lord, and that makes it very special. Secondly, I am currently in West Africa, in the nation of Ghana, and I am going to be sharing with you from this location regarding the Easter story.

What I am going to do is actually use E-A-S-T-E-R as an acrostic, each letter standing for some specific aspect of the Easter story from Luke, chapter 24.

**The 'E' in E-A-S-T-E-R stands for "EARLY"**

Look at Luke 24:1,

1 Now on the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain *other women* with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.

As we read about this Easter story here from the gospel of Luke, it says, "Early in the morning these women came to the tomb." We also need to seek Him early. You do not want to wait until late in your life to start asking spiritual and eternal questions. You need to seek God early. Psalm 63:1 says, "O God, You are my God! Early I will seek You." We are not promised forever, friend. We are not even promised tomorrow. In the Book of James it says, "Life is a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."

I just want to encourage you, do not put off your search for God until some later date. Sometimes people say, "Well, I know I need to go to church. Yeah, I need to do something with my life. I know that things are not right. I do not have things squared away between myself and God. I know I need to make things right." The problem is they never get to it. If you are reading this right now, take this as a word from God that you need to do something now. Seek Him early.

I remember many years ago I was working in a Mexican restaurant as a cook. The head cook's name was Leo. I talked to Leo numerous times about his soul. I spoke to him about Jesus; I talked to him about getting right with God. There were things in his life that he knew were diametrically opposed to holiness, and he did have a little bit of knowledge about the Bible; a little bit of knowledge about Christ. He knew that the things that he was doing were not right. Now, I did not condemn him or come from an accusing angle at all. I told him that God loved him, but that he needed to humble his heart and ask Jesus into his life. He told me, "Bayless, I am going to do it. I am just not ready yet. Not yet." He put it off, and he put it off, and he put it off. I worked at the restaurant for a full year, and he never did accept Christ while I was there, even though I talked to him on numerous occasions, and several times his eyes were filled with tears as he said to me, "I am almost ready..." Well, I ended up leaving that job, and shortly after I left, I got word that some robbers had come in with weapons to rob the restaurant. The robbers had gone back into the kitchen area, and they shot Leo dead right there in the kitchen. His blood was spilled on that same kitchen floor where I had walked so many times; and Leo passed on into eternity. Did he ever accept Christ? Well, he did not do it while I was there. Maybe in the weeks following he did. I do not know. But I will tell you: it just struck me - the fact that we should never put off spiritual things. We need to seek God early, even as these women came early to the tomb of Christ.

Some of you, you might get up at the crack of dawn to go fishing. If you know you are going fishing in the morning, you get up hours before light. You have all your tackle ready, and you are ready to get on the boat. Or some guys will get up before light to go golfing. The golf course has not even opened yet, and you are there with your cup of coffee waiting for that first tee-box to open. You are just so excited because those are things that are important to you; they are things that you love. Well, friend, there is nothing more important than your spiritual life, and we need to seek Him early.

### **The 'A' in E-A-S-T-E-R stands for "ANGELS"**

Look at Luke 24:2,

2 But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.

3 Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

4 And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments.

5 Then, as they were afraid and bowed *their* faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?"

6 He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee,"

Angels were very involved with the resurrection story. The angels appeared to the women there at the tomb, and I am convinced that no one comes to Christ without the aid of angels. I believe that there are unseen messengers from God who are influencing, guiding, and directing, even though we do not know it. **I think that if someone has a hungry heart, and they genuinely want to know the truth, God will move heaven and earth to get the truth to them**, whether He influences someone to come and speak to them and share the gospel with them, or they just have a sudden urge to turn the television on. Maybe an angel whispered in your ear to read this message today. You never know.

As I look back through my life, there were times when I was on my search, looking for the truth, when I felt a distinct presence with me that calmed me. I feel like it was angels that were helping me along the way. I do not have proof of that, but as I read through the Scriptures, and read through the Book of Acts, and I see how often angels were involved in the church, and in the work of the Lord, I am surprised that we do not hear more about angels today. Friend, the Bible says that angels are messengers sent forth to minister to those who become the heirs of salvation. I want you to just consider that. It is probably not a coincidence you are reading this right now. There may be angels involved that have influenced you to read this particular message.

### **The 'S' in E-A-S-T-E-R stands for "SEEMED LIKE IDLE TALES"**

The story goes on, in verse nine, still talking about the women (Luke 24:9),

9 Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

Look at verse 11 (Luke 24:11),

11 And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.

It seemed like utter nonsense when the women came back to the rest and said, "The angels appeared to us and said that He is risen!" It was not nonsense; yet there are many, many people who have that same sort of attitude. They hear the story of the gospel, or they may watch Christian television, and they think, "What a bunch of nonsense! Those Christians, they are all brainwashed." Well, some of us need to have our brains washed out a little bit. We need to change our thinking. That does not mean that we do not think. Christians are not brainwashed. At least I can speak for myself. I am not brainwashed. I think the only people who do not think are people who have been indoctrinated.

When the rest of the disciples heard this news about the Resurrection, it seemed like idle tales to them. Even though it seemed like idle tales, like utter nonsense, look what they did, in verse 12 (Luke 24:12),

12 But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened.

Even though it seemed like nonsense, at least Peter investigated. Maybe you have taken the posture that, "This whole Christianity thing is nonsense. It is just religious fanaticism. It is just for weak-minded people." **You owe it to yourself to investigate. Your eternal state, where you are going to be when you slip out of your body and step into eternity, is too important to be trifled with, my friend.** You need to really consider it, and you need to investigate.

I remember listening to a gentleman years ago. He was a Jewish Christian; a Jew who had accepted Christ as his Messiah. He shared his testimony, and it was so interesting! His daughter had come home one day and announced, "Daddy, I am a Christian." He said, "My world ended at that moment. Thoughts flashed through my mind: 'How could you betray me like this? How could you betray our faith like this? How could you betray our family?'" He said, "I was so angry with her I cursed at her and said, 'How could you do this?'"

She had told him, "Daddy, at least investigate it for yourself." She challenged him to read the Book of Matthew. He had never read any of the New Testament before, and he told her, "Okay, I will do it." He was just doing it in anger, and he was planning to do just it to show her all of the fallacies in the New Testament, and how the things that she now believed were nonsense. He said that he sat down that night with a bottle of wine, a pack of cigarettes, his ashtray, and the New Testament. He opened up to the Book of Matthew, which is interesting because the Book of Matthew was actually written specifically to Jews; it is filled with references to the coming Messiah from the Old Testament prophecies. So as he sat there, he said that he basically finished off the bottle of wine, smoked most of the pack of cigarettes, and every time he found a reference to the Messiah or another reference to an Old Testament Scripture, he cross-referenced it and went back and looked in the law of Moses and in the prophets; he found the narrative and began to really consider it. By the end of the night, even though he had finished all the wine, and smoked all those cigarettes, he realized that what his daughter had come to believe was the truth: that Jesus is the Messiah. He accepted Christ into his heart; and ended up becoming a pastor. Now, he did not abandon his Jewish roots; he just embraced them in a fuller way. Thank God he investigated! Have you investigated? Even if you think that Christianity is nonsense, friend, it is not. **If you will begin to search, here is a promise from God: "Those that search for Me with all of their heart, I will be found by them (Jeremiah 29:13)."**

## The 'T' in E-A-S-T-E-R stands for "TRAVELING TO EMMAUS"

Look at Luke 24:13

13 Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem.

14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

15 So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.

16 But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.

This is actually a story within a story that represents a journey that a lot of people make. Notice where it says, "But their eyes were restrained." That is an interesting phrase. Jesus goes on to speak to the two men about the events that had recently happened. Luke at verse 25 (Luke 24:25),

25 Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!

Their eyes were restrained, and they were slow of heart. They did not get it yet. Jesus had been raised from the dead, and they did not understand. Well, a little later on He came to dine with them. Look at verse 30 (Luke 24:30),

30 Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave it to them.

31 Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.

32 And they said to one another, "Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"

Jesus opened the Scriptures to them. **The Scriptures always have a lot to do with our conversion.** We are born again by the incorruptible seed of the word of God.

The two men were on a journey; their eyes were restrained, and their hearts did not quite understand. Then Jesus interacted with them, and their hearts began to burn.

I can remember when I was in the little mission in Medford, Oregon. I had been addicted to drugs. My life had been messed up on so many different levels it was not even funny. I remember the night that the truth of the gospel dawned on me. I sobbed like a child. I cried and I cried and I cried because finally my heart grasped the truth that I had been searching for my whole life. Some time later, I was back at that same mission as a young Christian, and there were other people there. I was sharing my testimony, other people were sharing their testimonies, and there were a couple of homeless Hispanic guys there. Someone was interpreting the service for them because they did not speak English. Towards the end of the meeting one of them raised his hand. He stood up and he said, "While you were speaking those words about Jesus Christ and about the gospel, our hearts burned within us." In other words, they got it! They understood. They accepted Jesus that night, and their lives were changed.

## The 'E' in E-A-S-T-E-R stands for "EXPOUNDING THE SCRIPTURES"

Still considering those two guys on the road to Emmaus, look at verse 27. Luke 24:7,

27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Remember, the two men later said, "Didn't our hearts burn within us while He opened the Scriptures to us?" Look at verse 44. Luke 24:44,

44 Then He said to them, "These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me."

45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

When Jesus opens our understanding, then we are able to comprehend the truth. The Scriptures that they were then able to comprehend were those concerning Jesus. We are not born again of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the Word of God that lives and abides forever. **It is through this unveiling of the truth that the Holy Spirit brings understanding to the hungry heart. Friend, He will bring it to your heart, as well.** I am proclaiming the gospel to you. Jesus is the Son of God. He died on the cross for your sins. He was raised from the dead on the third day. He is alive. The Apostle Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God to salvation, to everyone that believes." Friend, if you will believe the gospel, then you can come into a relationship with Christ, as well.

## The 'R' in E-A-S-T-E-R stands for "RESURRECTION, REMISSION, AND REPENTANCE"

Look at Luke 24:46,

46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day,

47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

### **1. Resurrection**

First of all, it talks about the Resurrection. Jesus was not just a mere man. He was not a good man that simply died as a token for His fellow men. He is more than that. Jesus is the Son of God. He was raised from the dead. He did not stay in the tomb. **There are many prophets and many good men throughout the centuries who have spoken on behalf of God; but, friend, Jesus is the One who was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit.** That makes Him very, very different. He was Who He claimed to be. He was raised from the dead. If there was not a Resurrection, then we are all still dead in our sins. The Apostle Paul said, "If there is no Resurrection, we are of all men most miserable." That would be if this whole thing is just a fantasy, but it is not. The Savior was raised from the dead.

### **2. Remission**

Secondly, there is remission. The verse says that remission of sins should be preached. It is not just a matter of our sins being covered. Under the old covenant they covered the sins of the people once a year through a blood sacrifice, but there was still remembrance made every

single year of those sins. **Through Jesus Christ our sins are completely remitted. They are removed; they are taken away.** We are not just wearing a covering for a year, but everything changes. In fact, our whole nature changes on the inside. The Bible says that we were, by nature, the children of wrath; by nature we were enemies of God. Jesus' sacrifice changed all of that. He died on the cross in our place. He was raised from the dead on the third day. **When we accept Him, because of the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit comes in and literally changes our nature on the inside.** It is so radical that Jesus called it being born again. The Apostle Paul referred to it as becoming a new creation in Christ. When God looks at us, He does not see sin because of the sacrifice of Christ. Jesus literally changed places with us. "He who knew no sin was made to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Christ."

### 3. Repentance

Finally we come to repentance. Repentance is an inward change of heart, which results in an outward change of direction. **When we repent, we are saying that we are willing to give our entire life to Him; we are willing to die to our own rights of independent living, and choose to go His way instead, in every area of life.** Friend, you must be willing to repent, to come to God on His terms. That is what confessing Jesus Christ as Lord is all about. Lord means boss. It means master.

Will you pray with me right now? I'm standing in a very, very busy market. There are people all around me, precious souls every one. You are precious, as well, in the eyes of God. If you will take a moment and pray with me, friend, God will answer your prayer. Just tie your heart around these words. Just say it out loud. Say,

**Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God. I believe You died on the cross to take away my sins. Thank you for being my sacrifice. Thank you for being my substitute, Jesus. I believe that You are alive, raised from the dead, and that You will live forevermore. Jesus, I ask You to come into my heart. Be my Lord, and be my Savior. From this day forward, I will serve You.**

Happy Easter. God bless you.

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