

## Reason to Celebrate

There was much cause for celebration in North Carolina this past week. The North Carolina Tar Heels won the NCAA men's basketball championship. Out of all the college basketball teams in the country UNC was the only one standing at the end of the tournament. While many people cheer for other basketball teams and some people aren't even interested in sports at all, it is a significant achievement for a university and cause to celebrate for fans.

On Easter Sunday we all have cause to celebrate – not just some of us, but all of us. People living at the time when Jesus was crucified felt a great sense of loss. Roman soldiers put Jesus to death in the most inhumane way possible. Even though Jesus told his disciples He would rise from the dead there was great sorrow on Good Friday, and extending into Saturday. But, the sun arose on Easter morning and so did Jesus.



It was time to celebrate. Now, without a doubt all of mankind fully realize that Jesus is the Savior we have long awaited. He is the Son of God. The promise of eternal life for believers is now within reach of all of us. The empty tomb was and is a victory over death. The resurrection was and is today a total verification of all Jesus preached and taught. Jesus was no longer just a powerful speaker, knowledgeable teacher and performer of miracles. He was and is everything He said.

Easter is the confirmation of the New Covenant between God and His people. At the last supper Jesus said these familiar words: *In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20).* Jesus sacrificed His life for our sins.

Easter is the fulfillment of many key events in the history of mankind:

- We have been separated from God by sin since the time of Adam and Eve.
- God gave specific instructions to Moses and Aaron on how to honor God with the annual Passover celebration. The lamb is the pinnacle of the Passover meal as they were considered to be spotless. Before the sacrifice of the lambs they often lived among the family before being sacrificed.
- Remember what John the Baptist said as Jesus was approaching. *"Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).* Jesus was that perfect, sacrificial lamb, who lived among us.
- Do you remember the seemingly obscure event in the account of the crucifixion about the temple curtain being torn? What is that all about? Prior to this time only the highest priest could enter the innermost and most sacred part of the tabernacle in an area called the "Holy of Hollies." Ordinary people didn't have access to the place where the presence of God could be found. The high priest was our go-between between God and us. We were hopeless because of our sin, separated from God, but needed the high priest as our intermediary with God. The tearing of the temple curtain symbolized that the masses – all people – now had direct access to God.
- And then, with Jesus' resurrection three days later, He gave victory over the eternal separation from God for all who put their faith in Jesus Christ and all He has done and continues to do.

That is cause for celebration! Happy Easter! He is risen, Alleluia!

Now, we can say with all certainty, *"And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life (1 John 5:11).*

You and I have a role in all this: *If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9).*

It is trivial to compare a basketball championship to Jesus' victory over death. The basketball championship is just for one year and new champs are crowned each year. Jesus' victory over death and his crown is forever. Eternal life is for all time. Let's celebrate!

**Question:** Have you asked Jesus to be your Savior, so that His victory is also your victory?

**Prayer:** Most gracious Heavenly Father. You are the Savior of the world. We believe in you and your victory over sin and death. We believe you are the Son of God. Amen.