

Have you ever looked back on your life and thought it was inevitable that things happened the way it did? You realized that certain things had to happen that way.

Looking back, here’s three things that happened to me, maybe you can relate.

- 1) Growing up, I had a number of jobs that I really didn't care for. But if I hadn't had those jobs, I don't think I'd appreciate being a pastor as much as I do. So ... it had to happen that way.
- 2) Going into my senior year of high school football, several colleges were planning to watching me play. But I never got to play my senior year. I broke an ankle that required surgery in the spring of my junior year. Those colleges never contacted me again. But if I hadn't broken my ankle, I don't think I'd have considered being a pastor. So ... it had to happen that way.
- 3) Years ago, when I was a young pastor, some members in my previous congregation really made life difficult for me. But if that hadn't happened, I wouldn't appreciate all of you as much as I do. Again ... it had to happen that way.

There are things you look back on, and realize: *It had to happen this way.* That’s also true of Easter, **“Easter Had to Happen That Way.”** Today’s lesson explains: *1) Christ Jesus had to suffer and rise, and, 2) Christ’s apostles had to preach and witness ... all for you and me.*

(1)

It was evening of the most important day in the history of the planet: the first Easter Sunday. Jesus' followers had already discovered his tomb was empty. Jesus had already appeared to Mary Magdalene, to the other women, to Simon Peter and to the Emmaus disciples. Now he suddenly appears to 10 of his disciples in Jerusalem, huddled behind locked doors without even using a door. They were startled, confused and skeptical, so Jesus invited them to touch him and asked if they had anything to eat. He wanted them to know, without a doubt, that he was alive. This wasn't a ghost. Their three days of devastating sadness, instantly turned into overwhelming joy.

Jesus begins to explain to them, Easter had to happen that way: **“This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”** Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them: **“This is what is written: The Christ will suffer und rise from the dead on the third day.”**

First of all, Jesus says: **“This is what I told you while I was still with you.”** Previously, on three separate occasions, Jesus had said: **“The Son of Man must suffer, be killed, and on the third day be raised to life.”** It had to happen that way, because Jesus said so.

When Jesus said: **“Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms,”** this became the most precise description of the Bible’s 39 OT books. The Law of Moses (was the first 5 books of the OT written by Moses), the Prophets (was the other 33 books of the OT, besides Psalms), and the Psalms. Each prophecy about the Savior in those 39 books had to be fulfilled.

- All those sacrifices prescribed by the Law of Moses ... had to be fulfilled in Christ.
- The substitutionary suffering of the Christ that the Prophet Isaiah saw ... had to be fulfilled in Jesus.
- God the Father’s abandonment of his Son, which David wrote about in Psalm 22 ...had to be fulfilled in Christ Jesus. It had to happen that way, because the Bible said so.

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them: “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer und rise from the dead on the third day.” Easter had to happen that way ... for you and for me.

Somebody had to be punished for my sins. Somebody had to go down for your guilt. God Almighty's justice had to be satisfied. But God's Almighty love for you and for me led him to find a “Somebody” to be a substitute for you and me. Jesus Christ. He had to die for us.

Somebody also had to conquer death. You couldn't take on mighty death and beat it. Nobody could. But

God's great love for us couldn't bear to see us die eternally. So, God again sent a "Somebody" to conquer death for us. Jesus Christ. Death's best shots put him in the grave. But three days later, he rose to demolish death's power over us. It was inevitable, Easter had to happen that way.

There's also something here for you and me. If Scripture says that our salvation had to happen that way, and even after it happened, Jesus directed his apostles back to the Scriptures, then ... obviously, we also need to study our Bibles.

When you get home today, open your Bible. Read a chapter, maybe from one of the books of the NT, maybe with your family. And if the going gets tough, e-mail me, text me, call me with your questions. Or ask me for some good resources to help you better understand the Bible. Even better, join us at one of our Bible Classes.

(2)

Easter had to happen that way. Christ Jesus had to suffer and rise. But there's another lesson: Christ tells his apostles that they had to preach and witness: **"Repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in my name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."**

Interesting, isn't it? Jesus kind of says: *"Half the transaction is complete: I've accomplished salvation. But here's the other half of the transaction: Salvation has got to get preached and proclaimed. And that's where you come in."*

Repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in my name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. *"I didn't just die for you; I died for all. I didn't just rise for you; I rose to conquer death for all. So, start in Jerusalem, and proclaim it" ... which is what they did for a couple of years. "Then proclaim my resurrection throughout the region" ... which is what they did for about a decade. "And then proclaim me the whole world over" ... which happened from the time of the Apostle Paul until now.*

Jesus tells his apostles they would have a special role: **"You are witnesses of these things."** It's true. They were eyewitnesses to his life, his death and his resurrection. They and some of their associates would also write all about this in the 27 NT books in the Bible.

To assist them in their special role Jesus is going to give them a special gift: **"I am going to send you what my Father has promised."** That's a direct reference to the coming of the Holy Spirit. **"But stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."** That's a direct reference to the Holy Spirit's coming at Pentecost.

Easter had to happen that way.

- How else were you and I ever going to get the benefits of Christ's resurrection, unless somebody told us about it?
- How else was anyone ever going to know the account of Easter, unless it was written down?
- How else was it ever going to get written down without the Holy Spirit inspiring those eyewitnesses to do it?

Again, there's something here for you and me. Your parents, your brothers and sisters, your spouse, your children and grandchildren ... how are they ever going to believe in Jesus and live eternally unless they listen to the Scriptures? And if that's not happening, doesn't someone, don't you, need to tell them? Don't they need your witness about their sin and their Savior? Don't they need your invitation?

Sure, the Holy Spirit could have chosen to speak the message of Jesus to them through angels, but he didn't. He wants to give people like you and me, who have experienced the joy of his salvation, the joy of proclaiming his Gospel.

Easter Had to Happen That Way. Christ Jesus had to suffer and rise. Christ's apostles had to preach and witness. And we get to share in that privilege! It had to happen that way!