



Easter

Andy Stanley

Note: The following content is a raw transcript and has not been edited for grammar, punctuation, and word usage.

0:00:00.2 Andy Stanley: So as we pause today to celebrate Easter, I wanna take you back in time to the moments in time just before the first Easter, the original Easter. Before there was Easter. Before anyone even imagined such a thing. And my reason for wanting to take you back to that particular moment is that I think it's the most compelling reason for why you should consider becoming a Jesus follower. Or why you should re-consider becoming a follower of Jesus, if you gave up once you grew up. And if that's your story, you gave up once you grew up, and if I were to hear your story, I imagine I would respond with, "Well, who could blame you?" What had happened to you? If I had experienced what you experienced, if church people had treated someone I love the way church people treated someone that you love. And if that's how the Bible was used or abused, who could blame you for walking away from faith? Who needs religion if that's what it ultimately leads to? Unfortunately, as we know, sometimes bad Christians happen to good people and it leaves a really bad taste in our mouths. Or perhaps you just got weary or grew weary of the Bible says, the Bible says, the Bible says, because once you grew up, you discovered what the Bible says, and you just don't buy it anymore.

0:01:13.8 AS: Again, if I were to hear your story, who can blame you? So for the next few minutes, if you'll allow me to, I wanna take you back in time to the moment in time before... well, before there were any Christians. Before there were any churches. Before there was a Bible. A moment in time where there were simply a couple of dozen of mostly Galilean men and women who found themselves wrestling with similar feeling. Similar feelings of mistrust and distrust and maybe disgust. On the afternoon after the crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus go to Pontius Pilate and they ask for the body of Jesus. They ask for permission to remove his lifeless body from the cross.

0:01:54.4 AS: Now, as you may know, victims of crucifixion were normally just left to rot. The goal of crucifixion wasn't death, there were much easier, quicker and less gruesome ways to kill a man. The goal of crucifixion was very specific. The goal of crucifixion was *oblivion*. No one would ever know you lived. Gone without a trace. No grave, no place to mourn. Your body, or what was left of it would be loaded into a cart and just dumped somewhere for animals to consume. But for the right price, for the right price, occasionally, the remains of a crucified body could be purchased. So these two prominent citizens risked their reputations honestly, to purchase Jesus' body.

0:02:36.2 AS: And just so you know, we don't know this to be the case because the Bible tells us so. That's much later. We know this to be the case because Matthew, Peter, and Luke tell us so. Two eyewitnesses and an investigative reporter. Many, many years after they wrote their accounts, certain words were included in the collection of ancient documents that we call the Bible. But again, that was much later. So back to our pre-Easter story. After retrieving the body, the two men along with their servants prepared the body for burial according to Jewish custom, and then they placed it in a cave recently renovated to serve as a tomb. Which meant it could be sealed with a large stone.

0:03:19.1 AS: Now, the plan kinda went like this, months later, or perhaps even years later, the tomb would be reopened, the bones of the deceased would be removed and placed in an ossuary. Basically a bone box. And thousands of ossuaries have been discovered in that part of the world. We keep people's ashes they kept people's bones. Anyway, Joseph and Nicodemus had hoped that Jesus was who he claimed to be, as had all of his first century followers, but now he was dead. Clearly he was not the Messiah. But in their estimation, he'd been tried and executed un-justly. He didn't