



Nick & Joe Save Easter

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Scripture: John 3:1–15; John 7:45–53; John 3:14–15; Isaiah 53:5–7; John 19:38; Mark 15:44–45; John 19:39–41

Idea: The man to whom Jesus said, “You must be born again,” paved the way for generations of people to believe that Jesus rose again.

Introduction

1. I love Easter because it is at the center of WHAT we believe and WHY we believe it. As we've discussed often, in the first century, the resurrection is what sent men and women into the streets with boldness that turned a city, then a nation, and then the world, upside down. **Many were crucified. Only one rose from the dead.**
2. We don't have too many traditions around here, but one we celebrate is giving people an opportunity to put their faith in Christ on Easter. So at the end of the message today . . .
3. Today's message is entitled “Nick & Joe Save Easter.” This is the **backstory**, the story behind the story, a background narrative related to the primary narrative. It usually happens **before** the primary story.
4. Of primary interest is the fact that Jesus rose from the dead and walked out of a tomb. The stone was rolled away. On the morning of the resurrection, Mary, Martha, Peter, John, and others peered into an empty tomb and wondered where Jesus was. They knew he had died, because they saw him buried.
5. **But if it weren't for Nick and Joe, Jesus would have risen from the dead in a mass grave on the edge of the town garbage dump. There would have been no burial, no empty tomb. No one would have even known if he was dead to begin with.**
6. Let me explain:
 - It was illegal to bury the body of someone who had been crucified. Crucifixion was designed as the ultimate public humiliation.
 - So, bodies were often left to rot for days after the victim had died. When the remains were removed, they were put in the local dump. No ceremony allowed.
 - This would have been the fate of Jesus had it not been for our two heroes.

As it turned out, the actions of these two provided irrefutable proof for the first century Christians that Jesus had in fact risen. But that wasn't their intent. They were accidental heroes. Like everybody else, they were expecting Jesus to stay dead!

But I'm getting ahead of myself, I should tell you the whole story.

I. We meet Nick [Nicodemus] early in Jesus' ministry. John describes their meeting this way:

John 3:1–15 TNIV

¹ Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.