



What is the event that separates Christianity from all other beliefs?

This is a question that I ask of the confirmation students. Here's the answer I usually get the first time I ask it: Jesus dying on the cross (the crucifixion).

That's not a bad answer. There is a part of that answer that is unique. Jesus was not just a man, He is God in the flesh. And the purpose of this God-man's death certainly sets Christianity apart. He was taking the punishment for the sins of mankind (including yours and mine), so that we might be reconciled with our sinless heavenly Father.

But "the crucifixion" is not quite the answer I am looking for, because a religious leader dying for his (or her) cause is not unique. Everyone who ever came along and claimed to be sent by God to lead people to some sort of afterlife has died. In that respect, Jesus is no different.

A better answer would be the event we will celebrate on Sunday, April 12: The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead (i.e. Easter). As the Apostle Paul said, "If Christ has not been raised, then our faith is futile (worthless), we are still in our sins and we are to be pitied above all men." (1 Corinthians 15:17,19). Our faith truly rests on the Resurrection. All religious leaders have died (or will die), but only One rose from the grave as proof that He was the One who was telling the truth.

But maybe **the best answer** would be this one: The crucifixion and resurrection. (That's not a 'typo'. The spaces are missing on purpose). Think of Jesus' death and resurrection as one event. And really it is. The crucifixion and resurrection are inseparable. One without the other would be like Snoopy without Charlie, the Lone Ranger without Tonto, Batman without Robin. Like salt and vinegar chips without the salt or a peanut butter and jelly sandwich without the jelly. You get the idea.

The crucifixion without the resurrection would simply be a meaningless death. The resurrection without the crucifixion is simply a pointless miracle. But put them together and you have the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the sins of the world - and the proof that God accepted that sacrifice. Without Good Friday we would have no forgiveness. Without Easter Sunday we would have no reason to believe Jesus' death brought forgiveness. Put them together and you have the uniqueness of Christianity.

So, as you plan your Holy Week, **please set a priority** on celebrating both the crucifixion and the resurrection. We will celebrate the crucifixion on Good Friday at 7:00 p.m. We will celebrate the Resurrection at sunrise (6:35) and again at 10:00 a.m. (In between we will have breakfast and a very special Easter Egg Hunt that will involve all ages - even those who can't participate in the hunt).

God bless your celebration of **The crucifixion and resurrection,**

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net