

“The Awesome Implications of the Resurrection”

Matthew 27:50 - 28:10

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We come together this morning to be reminded of, to be encouraged by and to proclaim to all who will listen, the most significant event in human history – the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 “For what I received I passed on to you as of **first** importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, (and) that he was raised on the third day...”

A NEWSWEEK magazine article, this week, said the “resurrection was the hinge of history.” (NEWSWEEK March 28, 2005 p47)

The Apostle Paul made it more personal and pointed: He said, “If Christ has not been raised (from the dead) your faith is useless.” (1 Corinthians 15:14,17)

Most people want to believe in life after death.

A.M. Hunter wrote, “From the incompleteness of human life (and especially all young lives tragically cut short – as in northern Minnesota this past week), from the crying injustices of this world (and especially the sufferings of the innocent, as from the tsunami two months ago), from the greatness as well as the misery of man, all have concluded, ‘There **must** be another world in which all lives will come to fruition, all wrongs will be redressed, all mysteries will be made plain.’” (A.M. Hunter Taking the Christian View, 51)

H.G. Wells once said, “If there is not larger life after death, then this life is a huge ugly joke. Man is like an ass braying across the (years) of history.” (in C.S.Lewis, Miracles, Selected Works of C.S. Lewis, 1210)

Yes, most people in the world want to believe in life after death and they say they do believe.

But when pressed about what that means, they struggle to invent something less than a literal resurrection.

Charles Spurgeon wrote, “Among men there is still ...a spiritualization of literal facts. They tear out the bowels of the truth, and give us the carcass stuffed with hypotheses and speculations.” (Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Volume 28, April 9, 1882)

But anything less than the literal, objective resurrection of the physical body of Jesus leaves us with nothing more than the hollow, subjective rhetoric of spiritualized imaginations.

Several years ago, Dave Shiflett of the Rocky Mountain News, commenting on the Easter messages in some churches, wrote that some messages are so watered down that they don't even qualify as warm spit.”

Easter is about the literal, physical resurrection of Jesus.

I come before you this morning however, not to attempt to prove the historicity of that resurrection; many others through the years have done that well.

The evidences are compelling and stated simply they are:

- The empty tomb.
- The appearances of Jesus after his death.
- The transformation of the disciples and the existence of the church.

As the NEWSWEEK article put it, “Without the resurrection it is virtually impossible to imagine that the Jesus movement of the first decades of the first century would have long endured.” P44

- The testimony of Christian experience.
- The predictions Jesus made before his death.
- The congruity of the resurrection with the biblical revelation.

(All six in Paul Beasley-Murray The Message of the Resurrection 246)

The problem people have with believing in the literal resurrection of Jesus is not lack of evidence.

Many years ago, Daniel Fuller of Fuller Theological Seminary wrote, “Man's ability to believe...is not owing to the fact that he

lacks the evidences **necessary** to believe the resurrection...but to the fact that he **does not want to** own up to the inescapable evidences when confronted with them.” (D. Fuller *Easter Faith and History*, 233)

But I come not to restate the evidence but to review the awesome implications of the resurrection for you and me.

But first of all, hear it again, told in all the simplicity of the actual historical event it was.

Matthew 27:50 - 28:10

“And when Jesus (on the cross) had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

^{MT 27:51} At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. ⁵² The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. ⁵³ They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

^{MT 27:54} When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

^{MT 27:55} Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. ⁵⁶ Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

^{MT 27:57} As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. ⁵⁹ Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. ⁶¹ Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

^{MT 27:62} The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. ⁶³ "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' ⁶⁴ So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

MT 27:65 "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

MT 28:1 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

MT 28:2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

MT 28:5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

MT 28:8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

So what are some of the awesome implications of the resurrection?

1. The resurrection demonstrates conclusively that the man Jesus was also God the Son.

The cover of the NEWSWEEK magazine to which I referred earlier reads, "How Jesus became Christ." (NEWSWEEK, March 27, 2005)

At first I revolted against that title, understanding it to imply that Jesus was not actually the Messiah but was somehow made out to be so by later Christian writers.

But upon further reflection, the statement can be understood to mean the same thing Paul did in Romans.

Romans 1:3-4 "Regarding (God's) Son: who as to his human nature was a descendant of David... was **declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection** from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord."

The resurrection demonstrated that the man Jesus was also at the same time the Son of God.

Had he been merely human, he would have died and stayed dead like everyone else.

Had he been only God, he could never have died.

But being God and man, this God-man Jesus died dead.

- His heart was pierced with a spear and blood and water flowed out.
- He was buried.
- The grave was sealed.
- But then he conquered death by breaking its permanency and rising to life.

As Charles Spurgeon said it, “The soul of the redeemer again took possession of (his) body and it lived once more.” (Spurgeon, Sermon from April 9, 1882)

Jesus’ resurrection proves, as nothing else could, who he actually was and is – the infinite God/man.

Our trust in the Jesus who lived on this earth over 2000 years ago is not misplaced.

He is not past tense. He who was alive and then dead, is again alive and forevermore.

We are trusting in the ever-living, sovereign, Lord of the universe.

2. The second awesome implication of the resurrection of Jesus is that the death of Jesus accomplished his purpose.

Most of us don’t think of our death as accomplishing anything.

The most that can be said is that my death means the cessation of my earthly life.

But occasionally we will hear of a death that accomplishes more.

A soldier might throw himself in harm’s way to sacrifice his life for the lives of his fellow soldiers.

Or we hear of someone whose martyrdom becomes the catalyst for a cause that affects the lives of many others. But with the death of Jesus we are not speaking of heroism or martyrdom; we are speaking of a sacrificial death that has universal and eternal consequences.

God declares, the soul that sins will die.

That is a universal truism – a holy God cannot tolerate sin and thus the wages of sin is death, not only physical death but more tragically eternal death – eternal separation from God.

But that holy God is also a God of grace and before the creation of the world God determined that he would satisfy his own divine justice against sin by paying the price for our sin, himself.

And so the triune God, in the person of God the Son came to earth “to give his life as a ransom for many.”

- Or as Paul said it in Romans 3:25 “God presented him (Jesus) as a sacrifice of atonement.”
- Or as in 2 Corinthians 5:21 “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us...”
- Or as we say it, “Jesus died for us, in our place, he became our substitute, satisfying divine justice against our sins.

Now the logical question is, “How do we know that Jesus’ death accomplished what he intended?”

The Bible says, Romans 5:18-19 “Just as the result of one trespass (by Adam) was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness (the sacrificial death of Jesus) was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man (Adam) the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man (Jesus) the many will be made righteous.”

How do we know that is true? **The resurrection!!**

If the sacrificial death of Jesus had not been sufficient to pay for our sins, he would remain dead still paying for sin.

But the one thing that proves that his death **was** sufficient to pay for all the sins of all God’s people is that he rose from the dead.

The perfect eternal Son of God met the full requirement of the law of God.

Your forgiveness and mine is established.

Forgiveness is not willy-nilly sentimentalism.

Forgiveness is based in God's law and God's grace.

And by his grace God met the demands of his law.

You and I can be forgiven because Jesus died and rose from the dead.

Again – the resurrection of Jesus proves God's forgiveness of me.

Do you realize the uniqueness of Christianity!

No mere man-made religion makes this claim or offers this grace.

Every other religion of the world lays on people the inviting but impossible task of atoning for their own sins.

Only Christianity says, simply trust in the Jesus who has already atoned for your sin.

That's why John the Baptist, when he saw Jesus, said, John 1:29
"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

And that is why the song we will sing in eternity to come will be, Revelation 5:12, 9 "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain..."

"With your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation..."

The resurrection of Jesus proved that Jesus' purpose in coming to earth was accomplished.

3. The third awesome implication of the resurrection is that sin's control of us has been conquered; we can live Christ-like lives.

I cannot stay here long because time forbids, but know that because of the resurrection of Jesus, we can respond to God's call to live holy lives.

In this life, sin still influences, even powerfully so, but it can't control.

The Bible says that Christians are connected to Christ in ways that make his death to sin our death to sin and that make his life of righteousness our life.

Romans 6:5-7,10-11 “If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be **united with him in his resurrection**. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that... we should no longer be slaves to sin... The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

When the Bible tells Christians to live holy lives, it is not falling back into saying we must earn our relationship with God or maintain our relationship with God by our efforts.

It is declaring that by our connection to Christ, his resurrection life is now in us, we are raised with him.

And the power that raised Christ from the dead is already at work in us.

That is why the Bible calls us “new creations.”

The resurrection of Jesus means that, in him, by his gracious resurrection power working in me, I can become more like him day by day. (Cf. Ephesians 1:18-20)

4. The fourth awesome implication of the resurrection of Jesus is that in the resurrection of Jesus life after death is demonstrated to be real.

One of the sad consequences of modernity is the loss of the sacred – an increasing number of people who don’t believe in any god nor in anything beyond this life.

Even in the growing post-modernity of our day, the best people seem to be able to come up with about life after this life is a reworked theory of reincarnation or fantastic ideas of some kind of oneness with the universe.

But Jesus proved that life, life as we know it, life with objective reality, life filled with relationships, life with bodies and minds, life now and forever is our future.

Jesus said, John 14:2-3 “I am going there (‘to my Father’s house’) to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

Again I ask, “What makes such a claim believable?”

The resurrection!

Over and over again the Bible makes this connection:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 “Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who (die), or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died **and rose again and so** we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have (died) in him.

1 Peter 1:3 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given **us** new birth into **a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus** Christ from the dead.”

S.T. Davis wrote, “So there is only one bit of evidence of life after death that is convincing to Christians. It is not philosophical arguments for the immortality of the soul. It is not the supposed spiritualist conversations at séances with loved ones who are (as they say it) ‘on the other side.’ It is not medical testimony about out-of-body experiences or the interesting stories told by people who were near death and then resuscitated. It is that Jesus was dead three days and lived again!” (S.T. Davis, *Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection*, 207)

So we can say with the authority of God’s Word:

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first of those who have (died)... For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ first; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.”

We serve a risen Savior and coming King!

5. The last implication I bring to your attention this morning is that Jesus' resurrection guarantees all his claims.

It means that every promise Jesus ever made is undeniably credible.

If a man offered you a million dollars you might find his offer hollow until you learned the man was Bill Gates.

If Jesus has power over death, if he actually defeated death by rising from the dead, then certainly everything he would claim about himself and every promise he would make for us is believable.

We are often tempted to think God is not here.

We allow the "noise" of our present circumstances to drown out the promises of God.

But as one man said, we cannot allow our present experiences to have the final word.

The truth of the cross and resurrection draw our attention to the sheer unreliability of experience as a guide to God's presence and activity.

What appeared to be failure was in fact the greatest success in human history.

And likewise our darkest hours will be God's finest moments as he does his work unseen by us. (Mark Yarbrough in CT Sept 2004)

He can be believed – every promise is guaranteed:

- This is the **resurrected Christ** who offered in Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
- This is the **risen Jesus** who said in John 1:12 "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God..."
- This is the **living Lord** who said, John 15:16 "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last.
- This **resurrected Jesus** is the one who claimed in John 11:25-26 "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me

will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Yes, I believe!

Why? Because he who was dead, **is now alive** and **he** has promised!

What are some of the implications of the resurrection of Jesus?

1. It proves Jesus the man is God the Son.
2. That Jesus' death satisfied Divine justice against my sin – I can be forgiven.
3. That sin's control has been conquered – being connected to Jesus I can increasingly live a Christ-like life.
4. That all Jesus claimed and promised can be believed – I can trust him with my life.
5. And that real life, life with God and God's family is my future.

I end with the way one author said it:

'Christ's resurrection remains far more than the sum of any or all descriptions. At some point we will find no words to say. Then we can do no more than pay silent homage to the awesome nature of this resurrection from the dead, the beginning of God's new creation.' The only proper response to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is doxology – to God be the glory!" (Paul Beasley-Murray, The Message of the Resurrection, p255)

“It is because Christ, having met and overcome death, has entered upon a new kind of life, the life of new creation, that hope has become possible for those to whom death was the blank end of everything.” (S.H. Hooke, The Resurrection of Christ as History and Experience, 190)

TIME magazine March 28, 2005

“The Gospel renderings do affirm that the tomb was empty and that believers thought the resurrected Jesus had appeared to some of them for a time (after his resurrection).” P45

“What explains the skeptical disciples’ transformation from fear and wonder to clarity and conviction about the empty tomb and its significance in the history of salvation – that through his death and resurrection Jesus would redeem mankind? P45

“Resurrection was the hinge of history.” P47

“Without the resurrection it is virtually impossible to imagine that the Jesus movement of the first decades of the first century would have long endured.” P44

“Whatever one thinks of Christianity, the history of Jesus gave birth to a new, lasting vision of the origins and destiny of human life., a vision drawn from the religion’s deep roots in Judaism. Everyone is created in God’s image; there is as Paul said, ‘neither Jew nor Greek, there is

neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’; all are equal special, worthy. In the Christian world view...’we are not congealed stardust, an accidental byproduct of comic chemistry. We are not just *something* but *someone*.” P48

Jewish author P. Lapide: “The solid hillbillies from Galilee who for the reason of the crucifixion of their master, were saddened to death, were changed within a short period of time into a jubilant community of believers... clearly something concrete had happened” – the resurrection of Jesus. (P. Lapide quoted in Paul Beasley-Murray [The Message of the Resurrection](#) 251)

Many say and believe that Christianity is dying. Could Christianity have ever seemed nearer to extinction than when Jesus lay cold in the grave? Every disciple fled. Was Christianity not destroyed when the Christ died? No! Are there not many more today than 2000 years ago who follow the Lord?

“Year after year, century after century, bands of true and honest hearts are marching up to the assault of the citadel of Satan. The prince of this world has a stronghold here on earth, and we are to capture it; but as yet we see small progress, for rank after rank the warriors of the Lord have marched to the breach and disappeared beneath the terrible fire of death. All who have gone before seem to have been utterly cut off and destroyed, and still the enemy holds his ramparts against us. Has nothing been done, think you? Has death taken away those martyrs, and confessors, and preachers, and laborious saints, and has nothing been achieved? Truly if Christ were dead I would admit our defeat, for they that are fallen asleep in Him would have perished: but as Christ lives so the cause lives, and they that have fallen are not dead: they have vanished from our sight only for a while, but if the curtain could be drawn back every one of them would be seen to stand in his place unharmed, crowned, victorious! “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and from where do they come?” (Revelation 7:13). These are they that were defeated! They why the crowns? These are they who were dishonored! Then why the white robes? These are those who clung to a cause that was overthrown! Then why do they have the long life of victors? Let the truth be spoken. Defeat is not the word for the cause of Jesus... We have always been a victorious people; we are victorious now. Follow your Master on your white horses and be not afraid! I see him in front with is blood-stained vest around him, fresh from the winepress

where he has trodden down his foes... Put on your white clothes and follow him on your white horses, conquering and to conquer. He is nearer than you think and the end of all things is near. Have confidence in the risen one, and live in the power of his resurrection.”

(Spurgeon, Sermon, April 9, 1882)