



G R A C E

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI ◇ DEO ◇ GLORIA

## **THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST**

### **Sermon Notes**

**1 Corinthians 15-1-8**

March 23, 2008

#### **I. The Necessity of the Resurrection**

- a. Fulfills the Old Testament**
- b. Fulfills the Words of Jesus Christ**
- c. Confirms the Deity of Jesus Christ [He is fully God]**
- d. Reveals the Vindication of the Son by the Father**

#### **II. The Uniqueness of the Resurrection**

#### **III. The Implications of the Resurrection**

- In 1985, two liberal biblical scholars, Robert Funk and John Dominic Crossan, began a group known as the Jesus Seminar. Since then, the Seminar has grown to about 200 individuals who meet twice a year in an attempt to “discover” the “historical Jesus.” In so doing, the members of the Jesus Seminar seek to establish that the historical Jesus may have existed; however, he was in no way divine. He was not the unique Son of God.
- The Seminar’s focus is on attacking the Gospel accounts of Jesus Christ, especially the Gospel of John, calling these accounts of Jesus and his miracles fictitious and fanciful.
- John Dominic Crossan, along with Marcus Borg, remains a vocal member of the Jesus Seminar today. According to Crossan, Jesus of Nazareth was an uneducated “Jewish Cynic” from a “landless peasant background”, and was initially a follower of John the Baptist. Further, Crossan asserts, Jesus was a healer and a man of wisdom who preached a message of tolerance...and nothing more.
- Yet, of all of the biblical doctrines that Crossan, Borg and the members of the Jesus Seminar attack, few, in their minds, are more mythological or fanciful than the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

- In fact, three years ago, at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Crossan debated the doctrine of the Resurrection with Anglican scholar N.T. Wright.
- According to Wright, given the historical uniqueness of Christ’s bodily resurrection, as well as the eyewitness accounts, one must conclude that Jesus Christ was in fact raised [bodily] from the dead. Crossan, on the other hand declared that the resurrection account of Jesus Christ must be interpreted metaphorically.
- Then, Crossan made a statement that I believe, tragically, too few of us who hold to a literal resurrection can adequately address: **“Tell me what the implications are of a literal reading of the resurrection account. Tell me how a literal reading of Christ’s resurrection [i.e., a *bodily* resurrection] could change the world.”**
- This is a terrific question. How would *you* address these statements?
- In other words, what if Christ were crucified on the cross for our sins, but was never raised ***bodily*** from the dead? What if He was only raised “spiritually” or as Crossan believes, in a “metaphorical” sense? What would it do to the Christian faith if it was discovered that Crossan’s beliefs were, in fact, true?
- This morning, our the answer to these most crucial questions is our pursuit.

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<b>I. The Necessity of the Resurrection</b>
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<b>a. Fulfills the Old Testament</b>
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- Leviticus 23:4-14 (The Feast of First Fruits)

Three (of the seven) of the Jewish Festivals occur within one week: (1) Passover, (2) the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and (3) The Feast of First Fruits (Easter Sunday). In these festivals, Yahweh prophesied the Person and Work of Jesus Christ – His life, Death, and Resurrection.

The Seven Jewish Festivals of the Old Testament:

- 1) **Passover**
- 2) **Feast of Unleavened Bread**
- 3) **Day of Firstfruits**

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- 4) Feast of Pentecost (seven weeks after Resurrection Sunday)
- 5) Day of Trumpets

- 6) Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*)
- 7) Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of First Fruits always occurred on the day after Sabbath of Passover Week. The purpose of this festival was to dedicate and consecrate the firstfruits of the barley harvest. The Prophetic significance of this festival is three-fold: (1) Firstfruits is a type of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 15:20-23), (2) Firstfruits is a guarantee of the bodily resurrection of all believers (1 Corinthians 15:20-23; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), and (3) Firstfruits is a type of the consecration of the church.

- **Psalm 16:8-10**: “For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.”
- **Psalm 30:3**: “O LORD, You have brought up my soul from Sheol; You have kept me alive, that I would not go down to the pit.”
- **Psalm 41:10**: “But You, O LORD, be gracious to me and raise me up, That I may repay them.”
- **Psalm 118:17**: “I will not die, but live, And tell of the works of the LORD.”

<b>b. Fulfills the Words of Christ</b>
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- **Matthew 12:39-40**  
 “But He answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.’”

- **John 2:19**: “Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’”
- **John 12:23-25**: “And Jesus answered them, saying, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.’”

<b>c. The Resurrection Confirms the Deity of Christ</b>
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- **Scripture states that BOTH the Father and the Son participated in the Resurrection**

- Although some texts state that God the Father raised Jesus Christ from the dead (Acts 2:24; Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 6:14; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:20), others speak to the work of the Son in the Resurrection:
  - “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again This commandment I received from My Father.” John 10:17-18
  - “Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’” John 2:19
- “...merely to be raised from the dead is not proof of the divinity of the one raised. Yet, for someone to raise himself by his own power, that is sufficient proof of divinity.”  
Puritan Samuel Willard, in a sermon delivered June 8, 1697

**d. Reveals the Acceptance and Vindication of the Son [and His Sacrifice] by the Father**

- Alexandar MacClaren states, “The resurrection interprets the death of Christ.”
- One Pastor (Brad D. Evans) states, “To use my words what God is saying to the world through the resurrection of Christ is ‘Mission Accomplished’...”
- “Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:8-11
- **Christ’s exaltation includes His resurrection and subsequent ascension to the right hand of God the Father.**
- READ **Romans 4:25**: “He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.”

“When Christ was raised from the dead, it was God’s declaration of approval of Christ’s work of redemption...By raising Christ from the dead, God the Father was in effect saying that he approved of Christ’s work of suffering and dying for our sins, that his work was completed, and that Christ no longer had any need to remain dead. There was

no penalty left to pay for sin, no more wrath of God to bear, no more guilt or liability to punishment – all had been completely paid for, and no guilt remained. In the resurrection, God was saying to Christ, ‘I approve of what you have done, and you find favor in my sight.’”  
Wayne Grudem

“As Christ by dying was made virtually, so by rising he becomes actually the object of our justifying faith...Christ could not rise until justice acquitted him. His bond was submitted for our cause, and it must be accepted by the Judge, and that only by a full payment of the bond. When he arose, this bond was returned to him, and cancelled. Our debt is paid, our bond is returned.”  
Samuel Willard

- ❑ **The Resurrection was the ultimate vindication of the Son!**
  - God always had the final word!

## II. The Uniqueness of the Resurrection

- ❑ One of the most common questions I get asked with respect to Christianity is, “Of all of the religions in the world, how are you so sure that Christianity is the *only right one*?”
- ❑ This is an important question, and one that deserves a proper, biblical response.
- ❑ As I have pondered this question over the years, I have concluded that the answer is quite simple: **Christianity is unique**. This may, at first glance, seem to be a rather weak answer to this most important question; however, after close inspection, this truth [concerning the uniqueness of Christianity] is rather profound.
- ❑ In fact, I often hear people say, “All religions basically teach the same thing.” Yet, this statement demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding and profound ignorance historical Christianity.
- ❑ Even if one disagrees with the essential tenets of Christianity, one truth is clear: the claims of historical Christianity are fundamentally different than any other religion.

### *1. God is personal and knowable*

- ❑ The essence of salvation is the knowledge of God [John 17:3]. Yet, no religion in the world, save Christianity, teaches that God is knowable. This truth essentially sets Christianity apart from all other major religions, such as Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism.

- ❑ Thus the truth of Christianity – the Gospel itself – points, not to a system such as Marxism, or an ethical code, such as Confucianism, but rather, to a Person – Jesus Christ.
- ❑ Unlike every other religion in the world, Christianity declares that the chief end of man is to find the totality of his satisfaction *in* God Himself. In other words, satisfaction is not ultimately found in any system, idea, or created thing – for the created order merely *reflects* the eternal nature of God. Rather, true satisfaction, true joy is found *in* the One to whom Creation points – God and God alone!

## **2. *The Trinity***

- ❑ No other religion in the world, monotheistic or otherwise, affirms the truth of God’s Triune nature: He is One God, existing in three, coequal, coeternal persons.

## **3. *The Incarnation***

- ❑ The Incarnation, the truth that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, sets Christianity apart from every other religion.
- ❑ Although some religions claim that god or the gods became man, none make the claims of the Scriptures: that God Incarnate remained fully God, while also being fully man.

## **4. *Salvation by Grace Alone***

- ❑ In his work, *What’s So Amazing About Grace*, author Philip Yancey writes of the following story involving the great author, C.S. Lewis:

*[Several decades ago], during a British conference on comparative religions, experts from around the world debated what, if any, belief was unique to the Christian faith. They began eliminating possibilities...The debate went on for some time until C. S. Lewis wandered into the room. ‘What’s the rumpus about?’ he asked, and heard in reply that his colleagues were discussing Christianity’s unique contribution among world religions. Lewis responded, ‘Oh, that’s easy. **It’s grace.**’*

*After some discussion, the conferees had to agree. The notion of God’s love coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, seems to go against every instinct of humanity. The Buddhist eight-fold path, the Hindu doctrine of karma, the Jewish covenant, and the Muslim code of law – each of these offers a way to earn approval. Only Christianity dares to make God’s love unconditional.*

## **5. *The Resurrection***

- ❑ Yet, today, as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we do so by examining how the biblical doctrine of resurrection is one of most unique contributions of Christianity to the world.
- ❑ Unfortunately, however, it seems that most Christians do not truly understand the Christian doctrine of Resurrection.
- ❑ In fact, in my personal experience, it appears that most Christians articulate something that is only partially true – pagan even – when describing what happens to the believer after death.

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- ❑ Actually, it seems that many Christians describe an *afterlife* that is more reminiscent of Greek philosophy than of the truth of Jesus Christ.
- ❑ In fact, the Greek poet Homer declared that there was no ‘bodily’ resurrection.
- ❑ Also, the Greek author Aeschylus writes, “Apollo says, ‘When the dust has soaked up the blood of a man, once he has died, there is no resurrection.’”
- ❑ This Greek understand of death was formalized in the philosophy of Plato – the great Athenian philosopher who lived in the fourth and fifth centuries, B.C.
  - According to Plato, two worlds exist: (1) a spiritual world [the Realm of Ideas] that is perfect, unchanging, and eternal; and (2) a physical, material world that is but an imperfect, changing, temporal copy of the spiritual world.
  - Consequently, the physical world was viewed as bad and the spiritual world was viewed as good.
  - For Plato, therefore, every human being had a soul that was trapped, or imprisoned in a physical, imperfect, fleshly body.
  - Death, therefore, was [at least for those who loved wisdom] the liberating or the freeing of the spirit [which he believed was good] from the prison of the body [which he believed was bad].
  - In fact, ancient Greek followers of Plato spoke of the Islands of the Blessed, where the souls of the departed would go for a blissful afterlife.

- I believe that when most Christians think of the “afterlife”, this is what they think of: **disembodied spirits living in blessed heaven with Christ.**

- This why Augustine, writing in the fourth century, stated, “No doctrine of the Christian faith is so vehemently and so obstinately opposed as the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh.”
- Furthermore, it seems easier for Christians to embrace a spiritual heaven and eternity than a one that includes a bodily resurrection.
- Possibly the clearest teaching in all of Scripture regarding the doctrine of the Resurrection is **1 Corinthians 15.**
- Read **1 Corinthians 15:14; 20-43**

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- Several things are significant, here in Paul’s passage. Yet, one of the most significant truths is that **Christ’s resurrection was BODILY.**
- In other words, Jesus Christ was not simply raised spiritually; but, spiritually and bodily.

“The resurrection of the dead in a body of flesh is guaranteed by Jesus’ resurrection in a body of flesh and bones; with scars of His wounds visible, and capable of being touched and of eating food (Luke 24:38-43, Acts 10:41). At His ascension Jesus did not discard his flesh-body, as is clear from Acts 1:11; Philippians 3:21; Revelation 1:17. Since the resurrected believers will be like the risen Christ (1 Corinthians 15:49; Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2), they too will be raised in their bodies of flesh (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:35-42). Only in this way is man saved in his totality, and able to live on a new earth (Isaiah 65:17 ff.; 66:22; Matthew 5:5; Revelation 21:1-3).”

J.A. Schep

- One of the keys to understanding this truth, is realizing that after Christ’s death, He placed His spirit into the hands of the Father [Luke 23:46]. He was in Paradise, just as He told the thief on the cross [Luke 23:43].
- Then, on the third day, on the Feast of Firstfruits, the Son was raised bodily from the dead [1 Corinthians 15:20].
- As the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep, we know that our resurrection bodies will be like His: 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:49; 1 John 3:2.



- Also, just as the spirit of Christ went to the Father after His physical death, followed by His bodily resurrection, so, after we die physically, our spirits are immediately with Christ in heaven [2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; Luke 23:43; Hebrews 12:23]. Then, at His Second Coming, our spirit/soul and body will be rejoined [resurrected] and glorified.
  - Note: At the resurrection, even those who rejected Christ will be resurrected. However, the dead will be raised to “the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:29). There will be a resurrection of the just and the unjust (Acts 24:15; Matthew 25:31-46; Daniel 12:2).
  - Those who trust in Christ will be resurrected to life!
- Therefore, what we are speaking of when we speak of resurrection is life *after* life after death.

**III. The Implications of the Resurrection**

- The question, then, as articulated by John Dominic Crossan, must once again be asked, “**What are the implications of a literal reading of the resurrection account. How would a literal reading of Christ’s resurrection [i.e., a *bodily* resurrection] change the world.**”

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**1. Because the resurrection was bodily...it was REAL. It was historical. It actually happened.**

- Not only this, like every other major event in Redemption history recorded in the Bible [birth of Christ, His life and miracles, His trials, His crucifixion, His ascension], it is attested by multiple witnesses.
- Consequently, it is not “blind faith” that leads us to embrace the Resurrection [in fact, “blind faith” is not even biblical]...it is a REAL HISTORICAL FAITH!

**2. Death no longer has the victory.** As the Apostle Paul asks, in 1 Corinthians 15:55: “O death, where is your victory?”

- Physical death is the separation of the soul from the physical body.
- However, this separation no longer has permanent power over us, because, through the Resurrection, Christ joins the body and spirit together once more.

- ❑ Not only this, through faith in Christ, not only will we be resurrected, but we will be glorified! That is, made morally righteous...perfect!

### **3. Creation, to include the physical world, is good.**

- ❑ God created everything *ex nihilo* – “out of nothing.” As a result, nothing is inherently evil. In fact, since God created everything, then creation is good.

“If death is the dissolution of this body, never to be reassembled, then death has succeeded in saying present creation is bad and is going to be abandoned. But resurrection says, ‘No.’ Present creation is good. It is corruptible and transient, not least because of sin, but God, having dealt with sin in the cross of Jesus Christ, will deal with corruption. And the result therefore must be the reaffirmation of the good creation, including the reaffirmation of human bodies.”  
N.T. Wright

### **4. Christ’s bodily resurrection reveals that Christ’s death and resurrection will be the cause of the redemption of all of Creation!**

- ❑ If Christ was resurrected only spiritually, it would have reflected an abandonment of His fallen Creation.
- ❑ This, therefore, would have demonstrated that Christ was either unable or unwilling to redeem that which had fallen because of man’s sin.

“When Adam sinned God cursed the ground because of him (Genesis 3:17-19), so that it brought forth thorns and thistles and would only yield food useful for mankind by painful toil. But Paul says that ‘the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God’ (Romans 8:21). He explains that this will happen when we receive our resurrection bodies – in fact, he says that the creation is somehow longing for that day – Romans 8:19, 22-23.”  
Wayne Grudem

- ❑ This understanding gives us the foundation needed for a unified, Christian worldview – a lens through which to view all of Creation and all truth.

“A Christian worldview involves three fundamental dimensions: the original good creation, the perversion of that creation through sin, and the restoration of that creation in Christ.”  
Albert Wolters

### **5. Christ came to redeem all of us, not just our souls.**

- ❑ Christ was fully God and fully Man. He is the Son of God and the Son of Man.

- Furthermore, when He was raised *bodily*, His flesh was glorified, demonstrating that our flesh will be redeemed and glorified as well.

“When Christ redeemed us he did not just redeem our spirits (or souls) – he redeemed us as whole persons, and this includes the redemption of our bodies. Therefore, the application of Christ’s work of redemption to us will not be complete until our bodies are entirely set free from the effects of the fall and brought to that state of perfection for which God created them...It will happen when Christ returns and raises from the dead the bodies of all believers for all time who have died, and reunites them with their souls, and changes the bodies of all believes who remain alive, thereby giving all believers at the same time perfect resurrection bodies like his own.”

Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*

**6. We are able to live all of our lives to the glory of God.**

- As Christians, many of us have compartmentalized our lives so that we view our religious lives and our secular lives separately. Our work during the week, unless of course we are a pastor, is seen as separate and distinct from our lives on Sunday. We live one way during the week, and another on Sunday. We do not live unified lives. In fact, when pushed on the issue, many of us will admit that we in some way view spiritual pursuits and occupations – such as teaching a Bible study or serving as a Pastor – as superior to those that are more “secular” – such as a public school teacher, a lawyer or an accountant.
- However, the bodily resurrection of Christ destroys such a false dichotomy. Christ redeems the spiritual **and** the physical, such that **every aspect of the Christian life is holy**

**7. Because of the Resurrection, we have power to live today!**

- It is true that Christ conquered all on his cross: there the battle was fought and there the victory was gained. But that victory was made into a triumph in his resurrection. Now his enemies fled, quitting the field. Psa. 68:1, "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered; let those also who hate him flee before him." He made a conquest of death itself, and it lay dead at his feet. Christ would never be known as a conqueror, except for this. If death had held him as her captive, where would his victory be? Samuel Willard
- **The power that raised Christ from the dead is available to us today!**
- It is this power that enabled the disciples to accomplish all they did to the glory of God.
- In fact, as John Stott states, “Perhaps the transformation of the disciples of Jesus is the greatest evidence of all for the resurrection...”

- ❑ In his book, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Josh McDowell quotes Harvard attorney Dr. Simon Greenleaf, “It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact.”
- ❑ The Apostle Peter writes, in 1 Peter 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,”

**8. Finally, the resurrected body of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the first fruits of those who believe, becomes the model for us...For we shall be like Him, and we will dwell with Him, in our resurrected, glorified bodies, in the New Creation.**

- ❑ At the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, He will, once for all, make all things new!
- ❑ For there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

Revelation 21:1: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

2 Peter 3:10-13: “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.”

- ❑ **This is our ultimate hope – a REALITY that is beyond human comprehension...REALITY that is a New Creation – a New Heaven and a New Earth; yet, John then speaks of the greatest truth of the New Creation:**

Revelation 21:2-5: “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.’ And He who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’ And He said, ‘Write, for these words are faithful and true.’”

- As N.T. Wright concludes so eloquently:

The message of the resurrection is that this world matters! That the injustices and pains of this present world must now be addressed with the news that healing, justice, and love have won...If Easter means Jesus Christ is only raised in a spiritual sense – [then] it is only about me, and finding a new dimension in my life. But if Jesus Christ is truly risen from the dead, Christianity becomes good news for the whole world – news which warms our hearts precisely because it isn't just about warming hearts. Easter means that a world where injustice, violence and degradation are endemic, God is not prepared to tolerate such things – and that we will world and plan, with all the energy of God, to implement victory over them all. Take away Easter and Karl Marx was probably right to accuse Christianity of ignoring problems of the material world. Take it away and Freud was probably right to say Christianity is wish-fulfillment. Take it away and Nietzsche probably was right to say it was for wimps.

- Thus, we proclaim today, in the fullest biblical sense, “**The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed!**”