

## The Central importance of the Resurrection

The celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is without question the greatest time of worship in the entire year.

- Today we rejoice in Christ's great victory over death. The grave has been robbed of its power, the gates of hell have been broken and we who were captive have been set free!
- The stone was been rolled away and Jesus is ALIVE!

The proof, the affirmation of all that Jesus taught, the confirmation of his deity, the verification of his messianic claim is NOT found in his teaching alone it is not merely affirmed by the signs and wonders that he performed; No, His deity and His eternal glory are made abundantly clear for all to see through His resurrection from the dead.

- The resurrection verifies the validity of prophetic scripture. (Job, David, Isaiah)
- It is the seal of our salvation,
- Our justification hinges on Christ's resurrection.
- It is the resurrection that proves Christ's atonement was accepted by the Father as the full and complete payment for our sins.
- It is the resurrection of Christ that provides all believers with the assurance of their own resurrection and eternal life.

With all of that in mind it is no wonder the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was the dominant theme of ALL Apostolic preaching.

- Throughout The Book of Acts, the Apostles actually had more to say about the resurrection of Jesus Christ than they did his death.

John MacArthur, "*The resurrection is the single greatest event in the history of the world.*"

- It is safe to say that the Christian faith stands or falls on the certainty of Christ's resurrection from the dead.

Thousands upon thousands of people were crucified throughout Europe and Asia during the iron fisted rule of the Roman Empire BUT only ONE died for the sins of his people and that ONE was raised from the dead by the power of Almighty God.

Clearly Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that is demonstrated by his resurrection.

Spurgeon, "*The silver thread of the resurrection runs through all blessings from the regeneration onward to eternal glory and it binds them all together.*"

- What a beautiful picture Spurgeon gives us. He sees all of the blessings of saving grace, as precious gems so that the jewels of Justification, sanctification, adoption, glorification are all bound together by the necklace that is the resurrection.

- This necklace becomes an ornament of glory adorning the neck of the redeemed displaying the vast wealth of God's saving grace.

He goes on to say that the resurrection is the Keystone Christian doctrine that holds all other truth in its proper place.

James Montgomery Boice: The resurrection is the pivotal doctrine upon which every other truth turns. It is the historical base upon which all other Christian doctrines are built and before which all honest doubt must falter."

Steve Lawson: "If Jesus Christ was not raised from the dead then absolutely nothing matters. But if Christ IS raised from the dead nothing else matters!"

This Easter Morning I would like to consider the place of the resurrection in the preaching of the Apostles. I would like to show you that the resurrection was:

1. Primary on the day of Pentecost
2. Prominent in the Temple precinct
3. Principal subject throughout the Epistles

It should be no surprise to us that the very first sermon delivered by the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost was focused primarily on the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

- The giving of the Holy Spirit Fifty (50) days after the resurrection of Jesus Christ provided the Apostles with a boldness that would take the Gospel from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, to the ends of the earth.
- The same men who ran for cover and hid in the darkness when Jesus was arrested are now found boldly proclaiming the Gospel in the streets of Jerusalem.
- The very same man who denied the Lord Jesus when he was confronted by a young woman is now preaching the resurrection of Christ in the city streets.

Acts 2: 22 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know

- Everyone in Israel was familiar with Jesus of Nazareth and no one could deny His mighty works the display of God's power that was seen in the ministry of the Lord Jesus was broadcast throughout the land of Israel.
- The truth of the Gospel was attested to and confirmed by God himself through the miracles that Jesus performed.
- Although the people Saw the miracles, Although they Knew it was God working through Him they still rejected him, and now they bear the guilt of putting to death the Son of God who was sent to give them life.

23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. 24 God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

- Even though it was the sovereign plan of God before the foundation of the world that Jesus should die for the sins of his people the perpetrators of His death rightfully bear the responsibility for their actions. (*God is sovereign and men are accountable*)
- We understand that God ordains both the means and the ends of all human events but he does so without violating human freedom or removing human responsibility.
- We see this same principle in the life of Joseph in the book of Genesis.
- When Joseph's brothers realized that the one they sold into slavery had become the most powerful man in Egypt they were struck with fear.

Genesis 50: 18 His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." 19 But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

- The evil scheme of the brothers was superseded by the sovereign plan of God in order to rescue Egypt and Israel from the famine. (*and to move Joseph's family to Egypt*)
- IN the sovereign plan of God, Jesus Christ had to die for the sins of his people.
- All those who repent of their sin and believe on the Lord will be forgiven and their justification is affirmed through HIS resurrection from the dead.
- In his preaching Peter shows us that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was anticipated 1000 years earlier in the Psalms of David. (Peter Quotes from Ps 16)

Acts 2: 25 For David says concerning him, "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; 26 therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. 27 For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. 28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

- David prophetically speaking of the resurrection of Christ foretells that his body would never see corruption or decay but would be raised incorruptible and enter into the realms of glory and the fullness of Joy in the very presence of the Father.

Peter addressing the crowd that had gathered in the streets on the day of Pentecost says: You want to know why we are so happy? You're wondering why we have poured out onto the streets with such rejoicing? it is because of the resurrection!

Acts 2: 32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. 33 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

- Peter's communication is bold and powerful when he explains to the crowd: This joyful endowment of the Holy Spirit that you are presently witnessing is a direct result of the resurrection and glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The one who was raised from the dead now ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit. That is what you are witnessing.

Friends You and I are now living in a time when Christ has been exalted to the right hand of the Father. We now live in a time when God has given the Holy Spirit to all who believe. Today is the day when We can proclaim the Gospel with boldness and joy.

- There should be a flame burning on the altar of our hearts as we go into the marketplace and into the highways and byways of this world making the bold declaration, death has been destroyed, the grave has lost its power because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- As you can see from Peter's preaching in Acts 2, the resurrection was primary in Peter's first sermon. Moving on we see the resurrection was also prominent in the Temple precinct.

## 2. Prominent in the Temple precinct Acts 3

Acts 3: Peter and John were going up to the Temple at the time of prayer when they were stopped by a lame man begging for money. Of course you remember how Peter responded to the impotent man.

Acts 3: 6 **But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!"** 7 **And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.**

Acts 3:8 **And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.** 9 **And all the people saw him walking and praising God,**

- As you can imagine this created quite a stir in the Temple precinct, everyone knew this man. They knew his face; they knew his voice. He was a permanent fixture by the eastern gate. He had been begging alms there for years.
- Once again a great crowd gathered and once again Peter seized the moment to declare the glorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 3: 11 **While he (*The Lame man*) clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's.**

- The power of the resurrection is clearly on display as the lame man, now standing, whole and strong clings to Peter and John.
- Peter addresses the crowd once again.

12 **And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him**

walk? 13 The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. 14 But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,

- Like a skilled prosecuting attorney Peter lays out the case against the people of Israel.
- No doubt some of them were present on that dark day when Jesus stood before Pilate. Some of them may have been in the crowd, their own voices shouting “Crucify Him!”
- And just as on the great day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit is laying a heavy weight of conviction on the hearts of the people for their part in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus.

15 and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.

- Peter’s proclamation of the Gospel has brought the finger of God into the face of these people. “YOU denied the Holy and Righteous One.” “You shouted along with the crowd for the release of that murderer Barabas.”
- You put to death the Author, the founder, the giver of all life BUT God has raised him from the dead.

16 And his name — by faith in his name — has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

This same Jesus who has been raised from the dead is both the source and the object of our faith and he is calling all of you to trust in him.

- The evidence of His resurrection, the affirmation that he is alive, the testimony of the power of His Gospel is standing right in front of you.
- HOW should you respond?

Acts 3:19 Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,

- When the reality of Christ’s death and resurrection are clearly laid out through the preaching of the Gospel. When the glory of God is revealed to the heart of sinful man, there is only one proper response.
- Repentance, change your heart, change your mind, turn from sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The results of such a turn, the results of this expression of saving faith, then and now is eternal life!

In Acts chapter 4 Peter and John bore witness of Christ’s resurrection before the Sanhedrin.

In Acts chapter 5 After miraculously being released from prison the Apostles were found preaching the resurrection once again in the temple precinct.

In Acts chapter 10 Peter preached the resurrection in the house of Cornelius.

In Acts chapter 13 Paul proclaimed the resurrection in Antioch

In Acts chapter 17 Paul declared the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the great city of Athens.

- The book of Acts covers a period of little more than 30 years and within that time the Gospel of Jesus Christ spread throughout the entire Roman Empire.
- Everywhere the Gospel spread the resurrection of Jesus Christ was boldly proclaimed.

But it wasn't only proclaimed in their preaching, the resurrection became a principle subject in the Epistles.

Last Point: The resurrection is a Principal element in the Epistles

To the church at Rome Paul write:

Romans 1:4 (*Jesus Christ*) was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.

Romans 6:4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers, that the eyes of the hearts would be opened in order that they might know:

Ephesians 1:19 the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

- Peter begins his epistle with a strong reference to the resurrection:

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

- Despite the Biblical and historical evidence for the Resurrection, there have always been unbelieving intellectuals, Sadducees and sceptics who attempt to disprove the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- In both the First and the Twenty-First centuries many people hold differing views of what becomes of man on the other side of the grave.
- Materialists (*then and now*) believe in the complete annihilation of the person at death. When you close your eyes in passing it's all over.
  - BUT I say look at Jesus – he was physically seen by more than 500 people alive following his death and resurrection.

- To those who hold to some form of reincarnation, believing that the soul of a man is continually recycled from one form to another I say:
  - Look at Jesus. He experienced a bodily resurrection. The very same body that was laid in the tomb was raised and glorified.
- Some hold the strange notion upon death that the soul and spirit of a man are reabsorbed into the great cosmos, into some divine mind or being.
  - I say, look at Jesus He was fully alive, the very same person after the resurrection as he was before the resurrection.

All of these erroneous belief systems have one thing in common, at death the unique human person that God created in his own image and for his glory is totally lost forever. Whatever it is that might survive, if anything is no longer the same person

- That is not what the Bible teaches:

The Apostle Paul addressed the sceptics at Corinth.

1 Corinthians 15:12 **Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.**

- As I said Eariler:
- Our justification hinges on Christ's resurrection.
- It is the resurrection that proves Christ's atonement was accepted by the Father as the full and complete payment for our sins.
- It is the resurrection of Christ that provides all believers with the assurance of their own resurrection and eternal life.

20 **But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.**

22 **For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.**

- The resurrection is a Biblical CERTAINTY! As I said earlier:
- *"The resurrection is the single greatest event in the history of the world."*

Let me finish with this:

If you are not convinced by the Word of God that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, then take a brief tour with me of the tombs that mark the final resting places of the leaders of the world's 4 major religions.

- Observe carefully the tombs where Abraham, Buddha, Muhammad and Jesus were laid.

When a religious leader dies, their grave is generally enshrined. It becomes more than a burial site; it becomes a place of historic religious importance. Elaborate structures are created in order to honor the burial place of the religious figure.

Abraham's tomb, located in Hebron, is called "Cave of the Patriarchs". It is a massive tomb built over the caves where Abraham's body was buried along with his beloved Sara.

Although Buddha was actually cremated, a tomb was created in his honor near the Hiranyavati River (where he achieved his "enlightenment"). It is a beautiful structure in which thousands of people come from all over the world to visit.

Muhammad's tomb is referred to as the "Mosque of the Prophet". In Medina Saudi Arabia is probably the biggest, most elaborate tomb of any religious leader. It was the first building in all of Saudi Arabia to have electric lighting.

Finally we come to the Garden Tomb. While many speculate that this was the burial place where Jesus was laid, historians cannot say with certainty. Reason being— he didn't stay dead! He rose on the third day breaking the power of sin and death.

The evidence is in and Jesus is ALIVE!!!

He has broken the bonds of sin and death.

Romans 6: 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.