

## Easter 2020

### The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

For the most part, the world does not pay much homage to Jesus Christ, nor does it have any real interest in this thing called Easter. However, we do and we do so because the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the cornerstone of Christianity. It is the one thing upon which our eternal destiny hinges. The first sermon preached after the resurrection of Christ on the day of Pentecost was a resurrection sermon, and, if you follow the life of the church through the Book of Acts, the resurrection is the consistent theme. In [Acts 2, 4 and 10](#), Peter preaches the resurrection. In [Acts 7](#), Stephen preaches the resurrection. In [Acts 8](#), Philip preaches the resurrection. From [Acts 9-28](#), Paul preaches the resurrection; and then you enter into the epistles, and the theme is always the resurrection.

In [Romans 4:24](#) and [Romans 6:4](#), Christ is “**raised from the dead by the glory of the Father**”. In [1 Corinthians 15:4](#), “**He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures**”. In [2 Corinthians 4:14](#), “**He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up with Jesus.**” In [Galatians 1:1](#) it says that it was “**God the Father who raised Him from the dead.**” In [Ephesians 1:20](#) it says the same thing that “**He (God) raised Him (Christ) from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places**” In [Philippians 3:10](#), it says, “**that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection**”. In [Colossians 2:12](#), it is says again that it was God who raised Christ from the dead. In [1 Thessalonians:1:10](#), it speaks of God and His Son “**whom He (God) raised from the dead.**” In [1 Peter 1:3](#), it says, He “**has begotten us to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ**”. In [Revelation:1:17-18](#), John echoes the theme of the resurrection as Christ Himself initiates the book in the great statement,

**“...Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. <sup>18</sup>I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.**

Now, I have barely even scratched the surface of the nearly 130 places that the New Testament speaks of the “**resurrection**” and of Christ being “**raised from the dead**”. In the gospels, Jesus told His disciples on numerous occasions that He would be raised from the dead after three days.

Mt 12:40 (NKJV) **For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**

Mk 8:31 (NKJV) **And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.**

Jn 2:19 (NKJV) **Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”**

In the mind and heart of Christ, there was never any doubt as to what He was going to do. So, the resurrection is the very foundation on which a believer’s faith rests. Stated another way, for someone to deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ removes all hope that they have for salvation. Please appreciate that the foundation of our faith is not based on the teachings of Christ, not based on the miracles of Christ, not based on the sinless life of Christ, and not even based on the death of Christ. The Christian faith is based on all of those things culminating in the resurrection of Christ. If Christ had not been resurrected from the dead, there would simply be NO salvation. So, biblical salvation for anyone is

predicated on the simple fact that we must personally believe, not only in the death of Christ for our sins, but we must believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now, [Acts 2](#) is the first resurrection sermon ever preached, and it was preached by the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Jesus has died, risen from the dead exactly as He and the prophets had said. Immediately following His resurrection, over 500 people had personally seen Him, and then after 40 days of appearances to those people, He bodily and visibly ascended back to heaven to be with the Father. [Mark 16:19](#) says,

**Mk 16:19 (NKJV) So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.**

Having returned to heaven, He sends the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and it is that event that facilitates Peter's sermon. The Holy Spirit comes with a sound like a mighty rushing wind. He comes upon the apostles and those who had been waiting, and immediately they move out into the city of Jerusalem, teaming with thousands upon thousands of people gathered for the feast of Pentecost, and they begin to speak about the wonderful works of God – and the multitudes heard them speaking in their own languages. It is such an incredible phenomena and it draws a multitude of thousands of people together to see what is happening. How can they speak this way? What was the sound of a rushing mighty wind? What were these cloven tongues like fire? What was going on here?

So, as the crowd comes together, Peter stands to preach, and he preaches about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and he has three major points. First, he talks about the historical reality of the resurrection. Secondly, he talks about the consequences of the resurrection, and thirdly, he talks about how the people were to respond to the resurrection. He makes an initial introduction, and then in [Acts 2:22-24](#) he says these words,

**Ac 2:22 (NKJV) "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know--<sup>23</sup> Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;<sup>24</sup> whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.**

That is Peter's first point. He immediately moves right into the message of the resurrection and he establishes the reality of that resurrection. That is where faith has to begin. It does no one any good for someone to preach about what the resurrection means unless they actually believe that there was a resurrection. It does no good to discuss how it affects someone unless they believe that it actually happened. The reality of all of this is that **no one can be a Christian, but not believe in the resurrection.** [Roman 10:9-10](#) puts it this way,

**Ro 10:9 (NKJV) that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.<sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.**

There are always people who will deny the resurrection. They denied it in Jesus' day and they will deny it now, and so Peter affirms that the resurrection was an actual historical event. In [Acts 2:22](#) Peter says that God made it obvious to all that Jesus Christ was indeed the Messiah.

Ac 2:22 (NKJV) **"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know--**

Nothing was done in the dark, no scheming here, no pulling the wool over your eyes in any way. God affirmed, God validated, God declared that He was the Christ by miracles and wonders and signs. There should never have been any doubt to those who saw Him and saw what He was doing that He was the Son of God. He did supernatural things that made people marvel and authenticated the fact that He was indeed the Messiah. They saw the glory of God the Father constantly being displayed in His life. Then in [Acts 2:23](#), Peter speaks these words, and from the results that we see, we know that the Holy Spirit took these words and drove them deep into the hearts of those who would believe,

Ac 2:23 (NKJV) **Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;**

I.e., you not only were eyewitnesses, but you were also the executioners. Here is a real man from a real place who lived a real life in front of you real people and He died a real death which you initiated. In [Acts 2:24](#) Peter talks about the torture and suffering of Christ's death. He went through a real death with real pain, and they knew it. They spit on Him, they blasphemed Him in His death. [Matthew 27:39](#) says,

Mt 27:39 (NKJV) **And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads**

So, Peter is affirming for these people that Jesus lived a real life, and suffered a real death. This was historical, verifiable, and much more than believable. So, he establishes the historical facts of Jesus Christ, His life, His miracles, and His death, but then in [Acts 2:24](#), he states the miracle of all miracles when he says,

Ac 2:24 (NKJV) **whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.**

Everything Peter had spoken previously was historical and verifiable to these people, and here, when he speaks of the resurrection, he is making the same exact point. The resurrection is a historical fact. In fact, that is his point. This was the sovereign outworking of God the Father relative to anyone's salvation. He explained in this way in [Acts 2:23](#) when he said,

Ac 2:23 (NKJV) **Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;**

This was no tragic accident, no terrible blunder, some kind of sad injustice – not at all. This had always been the sovereign will of the Father for salvation. These people knew Christ as a real person and they killed Him on a real cross. They made Him die a real death, yet, it was all in God's divine and sovereign plan, and it ended in the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ. Just as real as He was, as real as Nazareth was, as real as His life was, as real as His miracles were, as real as the eyewitness accounts proved Him to be, as real as His pain was, as real as His death was, so just as real was His resurrection.

You NEVER hear the writers of the Bible argue about the resurrection. They simply affirm it. It is history. Over 500 eyewitnesses saw Christ AFTER the resurrection. Paul did not debate the reality of the resurrection, but simply affirmed it. He did not try to prove it philosophically. He did not have a lot

of cute little nuggets of information to impress his audience – not at all. He simply affirmed that Jesus Christ rose from the dead because there were eyewitnesses. He did not say it was probable or possible. He simply said it happened, and the historical proof was that well over 500 saw people saw Him and had seen Him perform miracle after miracle after miracle for over three years. In [1 Corinthians 15:3-8](#), Paul says,

**1Co 15:3 (NKJV) For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. <sup>6</sup> After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. <sup>8</sup> Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.**

All of the Bible writers deal with the resurrection the way common sense people deal with any other fact of human history. Eyewitnesses affirmed it was so, and the eyewitnesses in the case of the apostles and the 500 brethren were the best of men, the most honest and the most true who dared to go to prison, who dared to die as martyrs, who had absolutely nothing to gain and everything to lose, and yet they affirmed the resurrection of Jesus Christ without flinching.

Jesus is a real person who lived a real life in a real place in front of real eyewitnesses and He died a real death with real pain and came out of the grave with a real resurrection. History is the basis of the reality of the resurrection. It has never successfully been denied or disproved in 2,000 years – and never will be. One day He will return on the clouds in great glory for all to see. There will be no mistaking Who it is, or whether or not it is really happening, or whether or not it can be trusted. Speaking of the Second Coming, [Revelation 19:11-16](#) boldly declares the following,

**Rev 19:11 (NKJV) Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. <sup>13</sup> He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. <sup>14</sup> And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. <sup>15</sup> Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. <sup>16</sup> And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.**

Next, in [Acts 2:24](#), Peter moves to the results of the resurrection. He declares the following,

**Ac 2:24 (NKJV) whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.**

What did the resurrection really do, what actually happened? Well, first of all, Peter says that Christ in His resurrection conquered death. He “loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.” It was a real fight, a real battle – one between Christ and death, and Christ won and death lost. Death just could not hold Him down. It was not possible. He conquered death.

That is the glorious reality, and the best part of it all is that He conquered death for us so that it cannot defeat us either. [1 Corinthians 15:54-57](#) says,

1Co 15:54 (NKJV) **So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." <sup>55</sup> "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" <sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

I want you to notice what Paul said in [1 Corinthians 15:13-19](#), and I want you to listen to the futility of our faith if the resurrection did not occur,

1Co 15:13 (NKJV) **But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. <sup>14</sup> And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. <sup>15</sup> Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up--if in fact the dead do not rise. <sup>16</sup> For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. <sup>17</sup> And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! <sup>18</sup> Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup> If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.**

This is not good if Christ is not risen from the dead, but v20 declares,

1Co 15:20 (NKJV) **But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.**

The second result of the resurrection is that **the Word of God is validated**. God validated the authority, the inerrancy, and the absolute inspiration of the Bible by prophecy. He prophesied, then it came to pass and concluded that His Word is true. There are over 1,000 prophecies in the Bible which God made, and which already have come to pass and can be verified in history, and none that did not come to pass as He said.

The third result is that Christ was **exalted**. [Acts 2:33](#) says,

Ac 2:33 (NKJV) **Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.**

[Philippians 2:8-11](#) declares,

Php 2:8 (NKJV) **And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

[Ephesians 1:20-22](#) declares,

Eph 1:20 (NKJV) **which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, <sup>21</sup> far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. <sup>22</sup> And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church,**

Then lastly, Peter addresses our **response** to all of this. I can assure you that the resurrection will not be of any benefit to us until we respond to it. Look at [Acts 2:37](#) and how these people in Acts reacted to Peter's sermon,

Ac 2:37 (NKJV) **Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*"**

You see, at this point in the text they understand that Jesus was a real person who died a real death at their hands. They know that. They also knew that He had been resurrected from the dead, and all of that placed within them a certain fear of what may happen to them personally. So they cried out "**What shall we do?**" It was the inevitable question. They were afraid. Jesus had died and then He arose, and one day He will come back as a judge. The Scriptures declare that He will come back to judge every man, and that He will bring forth every man to life from the grave, the just and the unjust, the saved and the lost. Some will be to the resurrection of life, and some will be to the resurrection of damnation. He will open every grave, and bring them to His throne; and some will enter into life, and some will enter into eternal death. Listen to [John 5:24-29](#),

Jn 5:24 (NKJV) **"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. <sup>25</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. <sup>26</sup> For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, <sup>27</sup> and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. <sup>28</sup> Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice <sup>29</sup> and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.**

"**What shall we do?**" – that has to be the question we all must answer. Look at your own life. If you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, then you stand with those who crucified Christ. Do you sense the guilt of that? Do you sense the guilt of sin because you do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you fear His divine wrath? If you understand the depth of the sin of rejecting Christ, if you understand the fear of the wrath of God, and if your heart longs to be delivered from that, if you long for eternal life that only He can bring, then [Acts 2:38](#) is for you.

Ac 2:38 (NKJV) **Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

If you believe God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, and if you are willing to confess Him with your mouth as Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. That is the message of the resurrection. That is the abiding truth of Easter. Easter is meaningless apart from your believing that Jesus rose from the dead and genuinely confessing Him as Lord. "**What shall we do?**" Repent and believe. If you do not know Christ this evening, if you have not fully believed in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, if you have not confessed Him as Lord and Savior of your life, and if God's Spirit is speaking to you, open your heart toward God the Father, confess Jesus as Lord, believe that He rose from the dead for you, and enter into eternal life this very moment.