

Risen

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, and we're here to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It seems that we live in a day and time where religion and religious belief is looked upon as a matter of preference. And people say things like, well, you know what, all religions are fundamentally the same. You know, they're just superficially different. So whatever works for you, choose that, and you can go with that one. And I think what we often do is completely ignore that belief, if it's disconnected from truth, really is useless. It's really irresponsible if we stop and think about if we believe something, and if it's not connected with truth, what good is that belief? Because think about it this way. Belief, truth rather, is not subjective. Truth is not something that, as we would say, well, that may be true for you, but it's not true for me. If I feel that it's true, then it is true. Well, the problem with that is we don't live like that. Think about it this way.

What if you went to your bank this week, and you went to the teller, and you said, I would like to withdraw money from my account. And the teller said, well, sir or ma'am, I don't feel like you have money in your account. How would you respond? Well, it really doesn't matter what you feel. I know I have money in my account, and so I am here to withdraw it. The last thing you would want to hear would be, well, you know, sorry, sir or ma'am, but that may be true for you. But it's not true for me. Well, either that'll be the last time you go to that bank, or you would say, it is true, and I would like my money. And that, I think, brings us to the ultimate question as we're thinking today about Jesus Christ and the ultimate question, the ultimate question that really affects all of our lives, affects our future, and affects our eternity. And as we are thinking about this ultimate question, is this. The question is, did Jesus rise from the dead? It really is the ultimate question, because if it is true, then it affects the rest of our life, and it affects eternity. If it is not true, then no matter how much we enjoyed the music, no matter how much we appreciated this service time this morning, it would be pointless, because we would be living a lie. We would be believing a lie. And what I would submit to you this morning is, really, the answer is not a matter of taste, and it's not a matter of preference. It's either a yes or a no. Did Jesus rise from the dead? I'm not talking about mere resuscitation. I'm not talking about reincarnation. I'm talking about hanging on the cross, died, buried, and got up and walked out of the tomb alive. Is the resurrection true? Because we need to understand that, because if we look in 1 Corinthians 15, the Bible actually says, Paul says, if the resurrection is not true, we as Christians are to be the most pitied. Because then what is our life for? Why are we here? So what I would like to do this morning is look at some possible explanations. Because some would say, the burden of proof is on you Christians. Did Jesus rise again from the dead? And really, it's up to you to prove it to me. Some have said, well, you know what? I don't believe that. And they take that subjective route. That might be true for you, but it's not true for me. And I won't believe it until I see it. And so, therefore, the burden of proof is upon you. What I would say to that is, well, maybe there is a kernel of truth in that. I think we all need to know why we believe what we believe. I think we all need to be able to at least give a plausible explanation for why we believe the Bible is true, and why we believe we can trust the Bible. And even the Bible uses legal terminology, and the Apostle Paul used the fact of witnesses of Jesus' resurrection to say, this is true. As a matter of fact, if you don't believe it, there are some who are still alive today. Go and talk to them.

So at least what we're going to do this morning is look at some possible explanations. And I would probably use the term plausible, because if we think about it, there's nothing in history that we can prove with 100% certainty. Really, there's nothing. As a matter of fact, even if we go all the way back to the beginning of our country, we really cannot prove that George Washington was the first president, because it may be possible that maybe there were forged documents and people created this fact that George Washington lived to encourage the formation of this new country. As a matter of fact, one writer even said, we don't even know that we were not all in this room created five minutes ago with built-in memories and a full stomach. Think about that one for a while. That'll give you a headache, right? So really, there's nothing that we can prove historically. So it's plausible. I mean, there are all types of people say we didn't go to the moon. You know, prove it. So what we can do is at least give plausible explanations. Well, there are a number of explanations that people actually give to say that Jesus didn't go to the cross, Jesus didn't die, and so therefore there is no such thing as a resurrection. Well, the first possible explanation that people give and say, well, it's not true, the first thing they give is Jesus didn't die on the cross. And if you're taking notes, that's the first blank here this morning. There are some would say that Jesus didn't die on the cross. As a matter of fact, there are some groups out there that said that Jesus didn't actually go to the cross. Muslims, for example, the Quran states that Jesus didn't go to the cross.

A substitute, someone who looked like him, actually went to the cross. And that's what Muhammad teaches. And if you look at the explanation of what the Quran, what Muhammad teaches, Muhammad actually wrote six or seven centuries after Jesus lived, was the fact that God rescued him from the Jews, and he went on to live a normal life, and he died a natural death. That is what Muhammad would want us to believe. So that's the first explanation as we think about it.

But think about this. Either Jesus didn't die on the cross and didn't rise again, and it's all a lie.

[8 : 20] Or the other option would be Jesus did die on the cross, Jesus did rise again from the dead, and he is alive today at the right hand of God the Father. And if that's true, then Muhammad died. And the Quran is a lie. So you cannot have both. And so as we're thinking about this, that's one of the first explanations people give. He didn't die. Then there's another theory, it's commonly known as the swoon theory. And what that says is that Jesus didn't hang on the cross long enough to die, but what happened was he fainted, he passed out, or maybe went into a coma, and he was taken down from the cross, and he was put in a tomb, and three days later, he awakened from his coma or from his swoon, and he came out of the tomb, and he was alive because he didn't actually die. But if you think about the plausibility of that, Jesus would have gone through numerous trials, in the middle of the night, was scourged to within an inch of death, and historians say you couldn't even recognize him, and he was a crown of thorns was placed upon his head, he was laid upon the cross, spikes were driven through his hands and his feet, a spear was thrust through his side, he was taken down from the cross, wrapped in grave clothes, and placed in a tomb, Roman centurions had rolled a stone in front of the tomb, and three days later, he was able to simply get up, roll this massive stone away, hop over the stone, and get away from these Roman guards that were posted by the tomb. I would say probably not very plausible on that one. So that's the first possible explanation. The second, there are some who would posit that the tomb was not empty. That's the second thing that people try to say when it comes to proving that the resurrection did not happen, was that the tomb was empty, sometimes called the wrong tomb theory. And as the theory goes, the women who the New Testament says went to the tomb were so filled with grief that they really were a little bit out of sorts, and they went to the wrong tomb, and they found the wrong tomb empty, and in their excitement assumed that he had risen from the dead, and then went to tell the disciples, and the disciples came to the wrong tomb. And for 2,000 years, people have been going to the Holy Land and been visiting the wrong tomb. And as the story would go, if they'd have just gone like one tomb over, they would have found Jesus there. Well, the problem with that is the Jewish authorities, the Roman authorities, did not want Jesus's body taken, and so they posted these Roman guards. Well, do you think they would have gotten the wrong tomb?

I kind of doubt it. And so this is the second theory that the guards went, the women went to the wrong tomb. It was empty because no one had died yet in the family, and so it was still empty. The other theory is that the disciples stole the body of Jesus. Some of you have probably heard that one before.

that they had stolen the body of Jesus, and therefore they would go to an empty tomb, and they were trying to get the world to believe in the resurrection, and so they stole the body of Jesus, hid it somewhere, buried it somewhere else, and then we have the empty tomb that exists today. Well, think about this. These cowardly, timid group of Galileans who were too afraid to even be mentioned that they knew Jesus during his trial, during the crucifixion, would have been bold enough to go and take on these Roman soldiers there at the tomb, get past them, roll this massive stone away, and then continue going on with this particular story, this conspiracy theory. Well, not so plausible. And the other thing is, during this period of time, resurrection was something that was not viewed upon as being positive. As a matter of fact, most people believe that this body was sinful, was evil, and why would anyone want to come back to this body?

So that is the other theory, that they stole the body of Jesus. Again, heavily guarded, probably not too plausible. Another theory was the disciples were delusional when they said they saw Jesus. Maybe they got overly excited. They were living in a period of time that is not as highly technological as ours. You know, modern science was science was not really that big of a deal back then. And so maybe they were delusional. They only, they wanted Jesus to be with them so much that when they said they saw him, they were, it was merely figuratively as he was leading them and he was with them. He wasn't really literally with them physically. And so, so as we stop and we, we think about that, you know, is that relatively plausible or not? Well, one of the main things that we, we see here is that the New Testament and even non-Christian historians have many, many, many places where they wrote that Jesus lived, and even over 500 witnesses saw Jesus alive after the resurrection. So we have these witnesses who would really would have been able to appear in any legal proceeding of that time and be able to bear witness, not by hearsay, but firsthand what took place. Remember we talked about

Muhammad. Muhammad wrote 600 to 700 years after Jesus. So he was going on hearsay. There were over 500 people that were firsthand eyewitnesses of this. So maybe they were delusional.

[15 : 16] I doubt it because that brings us to the second thing is during this period of time, people were dying for their faith. So who in their right mind would maybe perchance that they had hallucinated and saw Jesus. And so when they were prepared to be either beheaded or run through or whatever, then they would have said, well, you know what? It might've been a hallucination. I like being, I like living. And so we wonder if that would have been enough for them to lose their life if they had hallucinated. And as a matter of fact, Blaise Pascal, the mathematician and philosopher said this, I believe witnesses that get their throats slit. I mean, think about it. If someone will testify that it's the truth, you know, not only do they swear with their hand on the Bible, but if you lie will cut your throat, chances are people willing to tell the truth or more sure of them having told the truth.

Then we come to the other explanation. That is that Jesus died on the cross and actually rose from the grave. We see all of this plausible truth, all of all these plausible presentations that Jesus actually lived, Jesus actually died, Jesus actually rose from the grave. And so some would say, well, I still don't believe it. The burden of proof is still upon you. Well, at that point, I would say, well, I think we've pretty well explained what we believe historically as well as logically.

So now I really believe that the burden of proof is upon you to prove it to not be true. So as we are considering this this morning, that I would like for us to look and see the startling implications of if Jesus really is alive. If Jesus really did die on the cross and rose again, what does it mean for us? And I think the first startling implication, if Jesus rose from the dead, is that he is Lord over life and he is Lord over death. Because when we see that term Lord, it means absolute authority.

Now think about someone who died, gave up literally his life, chose to die, not by suicide or anything of that means or method, but gave up his life and rose again from the dead, then he would have the authority over life and death. Let's see what the Apostle John says in John 10, 18.

In John 10, 18, Jesus says, No one takes it from me, referring to his life. He says, But I lay it down of myself. I have the what? I have the power to lay it down and I have the power to take it up again. He has power over life and he has power over death. He could say on the cross as he was seemingly helpless, Father, into your hand I commend my spirit. And he breathed his last breath.

[19 : 07] He chose the moment of his death. But he also had power over life to say, I am going to live again.

He says, this command I have received from my Father. Who in this room decided that you were going to live? Before you were born, you came to your parents and you talked them into having you.

Right? No. Or who, which of us, after we die and after our heart flatlines, that we think, you know what? I'd like to live again.

Okay, I'm going back. It doesn't work that way. But Jesus said, I have the power to lay it down. I have the power to take it back up again.

He alone has that power. And therefore, we conclude that he is Lord over life and death. And think about this. His being Lord is not subjective.

[20 : 13] We don't decide to make Jesus Lord. He is Lord. No matter how we feel, he is Lord.

Lord. And we would liken it to going to an electrical outlet and to say, you know what? I've decided that 110 volt AC current is not going to hurt me.

So therefore, I will take this bobby pin or these metal objects and stick them in the outlet. Because I don't believe it's going to hurt me. It doesn't matter what you believe. It will hurt you.

So Jesus is Lord. We don't decide to make him Lord. So people say, well, you know what? I don't think he's Lord over my life. Or I'm Lord over my own life.

And I won't let Jesus be Lord over my life. The fact of the matter is, he is. Well, now we just have to confess and agree that he is.

[21 : 11] So the first thing is, he is Lord over life and death. That has so many implications in our lives. Because who's living your life? Who's calling the shots?

Who's deciding what you do with your life? The second implication that I believe we have is, if he's Lord over life and he's Lord over death, then he is also Lord over sin and Satan.

Because the Bible says that death is a consequence of sin. And since we die spiritually and we ultimately end up dying physically because of sin, and death is the consequence of sin, and who alone has the authority to forgive sin?

The Bible says God. Jesus says, I have the authority to forgive sin. And so as the authority to forgive sin, then he is Lord over sin.

Meaning, he did not create sin, but he can say, because of my death on the cross, I have paid the penalty forever. Therefore, I have the power and the authority to forgive sin.

[22 : 27] And who did he conquer when he rose from the dead? He conquered Satan. And we can say a big amen to that and be thankful that Jesus is the one who is the Lord over our life.

We sang about it earlier this morning, but I would like for us to turn to 1 Corinthians 15. Right now. 1 Corinthians 15, 55 through 57.

And this is what the Apostle Paul is talking about. He says, O death, where is your sting? O hell or O Hades, where is your victory?

He says, the sting of death is what? The sting of death is sin. But since Jesus is Lord, he says, and the strength of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord. The next implication is, not only is Jesus Lord over life and death, not only is Jesus Lord over sin and Satan, but he is Lord over you, and he is Lord over me.

[23 : 43] This is the foundational confession of Christianity. That he is our Lord. If we look at Romans chapter 10, verses 9 and 10, a very, very popular verse, or two verses, where we use as our confession to the fact that Jesus is Lord, and that we confess with our mouth that Jesus is who he says he claimed to be, and with that mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Let's look at Romans chapter 10, verses 9 and 10. 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.

Salvation being delivered from the penalty of sin. One day literally being delivered into the presence of our heavenly Father because of what Jesus did on the cross of Calvary.

Verse 10 says, For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

He is Lord over you and me. And if that is true, then it means he reigns over us supremely.

[25 : 17] Meaning, he has the ultimate rule and reign. He is sovereign over our lives. Now this is objective truth.

It's not subjective. Well, you know what? I don't want him to be Lord. It doesn't change the fact. You look at your biological parents. I don't want them to be my parents. You cannot change that fact.

They are your parents. And sometimes you look at your children, which weren't my children. You know, some people might actually say that. The problem is you cannot change that because it is objective truth.

Jesus is Lord. He reigns over us supremely. The second thing that that means, if Jesus Christ is Lord over you and me, the implication is he loves us deeply.

He loves you and me deeply. Why did Jesus come to the cross or come to the earth? Mark 10 45 says that he came not to be served, but he came to serve.

[26 : 30] And also the Bible says, And to give his life as a ransom. Why did he do that? He did that for you and me.

We talked a few weeks ago that ultimately it was to glorify God, but he did it because he loves you and me.

Why did Jesus Christ go to the cross in the first place? To pay for our sin. He didn't have to do that. But he chose to do it because of his great love.

Wherewith he loved us, he took upon himself the form of human flesh, became a human being, lived on this earth, got hungry, got tired, got cold, got wet, suffered pain, humiliation, as he hung there on the cross.

And he did it for you and for me. Sometimes we do with our children. I do with our grandkids. Do you know how much Poppy loves you? So much.

[27 : 39] You know, people say different things, you know, to the moon and back, whatever we might say, it goes to show how much we love them. How much did Jesus love us?

Enough to spread his arms out wide and be nailed to the cross, willingly, as a sheep, willingly going to the slaughter, doing it for you and for me.

And who can say that God does not love you and me. And then the third thing. He will judge us eternally.

He will judge. Jesus Christ one day will judge us. Matter of fact, let's look at John 5, 21 and 22. John 5, 21 and 22.

For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom he will. Verse 22. For the Father judges no one.

[28 : 43] But to whom has judgment been committed? Jesus Christ. But has committed all judgment to the Son. You know what? This is great news.

Because who judges us? The one who paid the penalty for our sin. That's why Romans chapter 8, verse 1 says, there is therefore now, what?

No condemnation. So we don't have to worry about Jesus judging us because he has already paid the penalty. We don't have to worry about being condemned because there's no condemnation to them who love God and who are called according to his purpose.

As the book of Romans tells us in chapter 8. As followers of Jesus Christ, we will appear before Jesus one day at the judgment seat and he will give out those rewards for what we have done in this life.

Talks about wood, hay, stubble, gold, silver, precious stones. What we've done in this life under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit will receive crowns for those things that we have done that were just based upon our own talent and did it out of self-serving motives that will not accomplish anything.

[30 : 01] And so Jesus Christ judges us and our eternity is already determined on this earth. Isn't that awesome? We don't have to wait till we stand before God because there will be many who stand before God at the great white throne judgment that we read about in the book of Revelation where God will say depart from me you work of iniquity.

I never knew you but I stand upon the authority of God's word when we say whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

We don't have to wait. We don't have to wait for someone to pray us out of a place of limbo because we determine on this earth during our lifetime whom we will serve and to whom we will confess that Jesus is Lord and we realize that Jesus Christ if he died on the cross and rose again then the implications are he's my Lord and he wants to be my Savior and all we need to do is trust what Jesus did on the cross of Calvary.

No matter what a skeptic may say Tim Keller a pastor an author said this I always say to my skeptical secular friends that even if they can't believe in the resurrection they should want it to be true.

Most of them care deeply about justice for the poor alleviating hunger and disease and caring for the environment yet many of them believe that the material world was caused by accident and that the world and everything in it will eventually simply burn up.

[31 : 51] They find it discouraging that so few people care about justice without realizing that their own worldview undermines any motivation to make the world a better place.

Now think about that for a moment. What's the motivation to make the world a better place if this happened by accident and it's all going to go away and there is no eternity?

Why sacrifice for the needs of others if in the end nothing we do will make any difference? However if the resurrection of Jesus happened that means there's infinite hope and reason to pour ourselves out for the needs of the world.

So the resurrection of Jesus Christ truly does make all the difference in the world. anyone who doesn't believe it should want to believe it not the opposite because to not believe it and to not want it to be true meaning that nothing we do on this earth really does matter and has no purpose.

So when someone says my life has no purpose if they truly believe that there is no resurrection then they're right. Your life has no purpose.

[33 : 09] Your life has no meaning because we're here by accident. We're just animals that just has a few more pieces to our brain so that way we can think and we're sentient and we know that we're alive.

So what difference does that make? We should want to know or we should want to believe in the resurrection. So we come down as we come down to a close in the personal question. and the personal question is this do you believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Do we believe? And I trust that we do this morning. I trust that you believe this morning. It's been put this way. If we believe this with all of our heart and we live this with our lives our entire life and it's not true then what difference does it make?

We've simply lived a good life. But if on the other hand we do not believe it and we do not submit to Jesus and trust Jesus as Savior and it is true then they have everything to lose.

Think about that. either nothing to lose by trusting Jesus his resurrection that God's word is true nothing to lose.

[34 : 34] But if it is true and someone chooses not to believe it then they have eternity to lose. So do we believe? Do we believe?

The Bible says if we confess with our mouth Lord Jesus and he says and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved.

But think about this. There are people all throughout the world today that believe that Jesus lived and that Jesus died and that Jesus rose again from the dead.

Is that enough to place a person into the family of God? I would say no. Because does not the Bible itself say that even the demons believe and tremble?

So if the Bible says believe what does he mean if it's more than believe? Well if you look back at Romans 10 9 and 10 if we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead you will be saved for with the heart one believes.

[35 : 56] You realize there is a difference between believing something cognitively believing something mentally and actually believing it with your heart and relying on it and trusting in it.

There is a big big difference. There are a lot of people that believe an airplane can take us from point A to point B. We can believe that that airplane is safe and we can get on it and get from one place to the other.

Now I will not make a United Airlines joke this morning but we can believe it with our mind but until we actually step on it and allow the pilot to take us from point A to point B it does us absolutely no good.

And so it is with the heart one believes unto righteousness. So that brings me to the next question. Do you surrender to the lordship of Jesus? Now let me tell you this that is not necessary.

We do not have to understand completely Jesus' lordship to be saved. As some would say and some would say well they believe in lordship salvation.

[37 : 08] But I will say this. What does the apostle Paul in the book of Romans say? That if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is lord.

If you confess with your mouth the what? Lord Jesus. Salvation I believe involves trusting Jesus as lord.

Because if we just want to believe it but we don't want to live it then how efficacious is that belief? We don't have to understand it but if we just believe and say you know what?

I'll believe but I don't want to follow. What did Jesus say? Follow me. Follow me. Follow me. So belief alone in the head is not alone.

It's with the heart man believes. Not only do I believe it, I trust it and I know Jesus died in my place. I know he's lord.

[38 : 14] Because that's what Romans chapter 10 verse 9 says. Confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. So you see as we said earlier the resurrection is part of the foundational confession of Christianity.

Do we believe that Jesus is God? We must also believe that God raised him from the dead. And believe that Jesus is who he says he is.

So the question is do you believe and do you trust? Do you believe that Jesus is God? Do you believe that he rose again? And are you trusting that truth?

to be that which will cover your sin will be all that's necessary for God to be satisfied.

Because Jesus Christ is the Bible calls the propitiation for our sin. When God looks upon Jesus' death on the cross he is satisfied. That's why the apostle Paul could say there is therefore now no condemnation to them who love God and who are the called.

[39 : 35] Do we believe? Do we trust? And do you realize that the lordship of Jesus Christ is not subjective? It is objective truth. He's lord of our lives whether we believe it or not.

So how about why not okay Jesus I surrender I surrender to the inevitable truth.

that you are my lord. And let's live life accordingly. Because Jesus is alive.

He is risen. Amen. Let's pray.