

Easter 2024
Resurrection: what is the big deal?

1. Prayer

2. Sermon introduction:

- a. By every objective criteria Jesus of Nazareth is the most influential person to ever live!!!
- b. Consider these facts-
 - i. Jesus currently has more followers than any other person in world history (2.4 billion).
 - ii. Jesus continues to be the center piece of the world's yearly calendar. We live in the year 2024, which means that it is 2024 years after Christ's birth.
 - iii. Jesus continues to shape our weekly calendar. Historically, the world takes Sunday off because Sunday is the day that Jesus rose from the dead.
 - iv. Over 98 nations in world history have officially called themselves "Christian nations." No other person has directly influenced this many nations.
 - v. Jesus has more cities named after him or his followers than any other person in world history (over 20,000 cities in Europe alone).
 - vi. Jesus has more buildings named after him than any other person in world history.
 - vii. There have been more books, songs, and poems written about Jesus than any other person in world history.
 - viii. Jesus followers are responsible for the scientific revolution, the creation of universities, the creation of hospitals, the abolition of slavery, and the liberation of woman. (Jesus Skeptic)
 - ix. In light of these facts, renowned Yale historian Jaroslav Pelikan wrote,
 1. "Regardless of what anyone may personally think or believe about him, Jesus of Nazareth has been the dominant figure in the history of Western culture for almost twenty centuries." (Wellum, 25)
- c. All these facts raise one important question—why?
 - i. Why is Jesus so influential?
 - ii. Why is Jesus more influential than Mohammad, Joseph Smith, Abraham, the Buddha, Caesar, Napoleon, or George Washington?
- d. Why is he the most influential person to ever live?
 - i. Because he rose from the dead.
 - ii. But why does the resurrection make him so influential?
 - iii. To help us answer this question we are going to look at three aspects of the resurrection.
 1. The reality of the resurrection
 2. The results of the resurrection

3. The recipients of the resurrection

1. The reality of the resurrection

- a. Did the resurrection really happen?
 - i. Is it a reality?
 - ii. Is it fact?
 - iii. Is it history?
 - iv. Since I preached an entire sermon on this subject a few weeks ago, I'm not going to repeat myself. But for those who missed that sermon, permit me to summarize the evidence for the resurrection.

- b. Here is a summary of the evidence-
 - i. Jesus lived 2000 years ago; this is confirmed by 17 ancient secular sources (Koukle, Street Smarts, Chapter 11). Denying that Jesus lived is like denying the holocaust.
 - ii. Jesus dies (this is confirmed by five non-Christian sources of the time).
 - iii. His disciples are completely dejected and afraid.
 - iv. Three days later Jesus rises from the grave and appears to more than 500 eye-witnesses, in 12 different locations, over a period of 40 days.
 - v. A few weeks after the resurrection, over 10,000 fiercely monotheistic Jews, passionately opposed to worshipping a man, decide to worship Jesus Christ in light of the evidence for his resurrection.
 - vi. Many of them are so convinced of his bodily resurrection that they are willing to suffer and die for this belief.
 - vii. The resurrected Christ continues to radically transform billions of lives around the world today.

- c. Dave, I still don't believe...
 - i. If you're a skeptic (and skeptics are welcome here), you have the burden of proof.
 - ii. You must be willing to provide first century evidence contrary to the Gospel accounts.
 - iii. You must disregard eyewitness testimony.
 - iv. You must put forward an alternative theory that you can back up with at least 3-4 first century sources.
 - v. You must explain why 2.4 billion people worldwide are wrong.

- d. Over the years many exceptional scholars have set out to disprove the bodily resurrection of Jesus.
 - i. Here is the account of J. Warner Wallace...
 - ii. "I was a committed atheist when I first heard a pastor preach a sermon that described the resurrection of Jesus. This pastor seemed to actually believe Jesus rose from the dead and was still alive today. I assumed it was just another example of "blind faith"; another well-

intentioned church leader believing something for which he had no supporting evidence. Worse yet, I suspected he possessed an “unreasonable faith” and trusted something in spite of the evidence. I was familiar with the rules of evidence and the process by which we can determine the truth about past events. As a detective, I was doing this for a living. I decided to investigate the resurrection as I would any unsolved case from the distant past. My journey led me out of atheism to the truth of Christianity. As I applied my skills as a detective, I became more convinced that the New Testament gospel accounts reliably describe the life, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (Wallace, J. Warner. *Alive: A Cold-Case Approach to the Resurrection* (p. 4). David C Cook. Kindle Edition)

iii. I could give several more examples of skeptics converting to Christianity in light of the evidence for the resurrection.

e. OK, I get it, Jesus rose from the dead. Why does this matter? This brings us to the second heading.

f. First, the reality of the resurrection.

2. The results of the resurrection

a. Introduction

- i. Again, why is Jesus Christ so influential?
- ii. Because of the results of the resurrection.
- iii. What are the results of the resurrection? I have a book that lists 50 results—literally, but don’t worry, I’m only going to highlight four.
- iv. What are they?

b. First, the resurrection results in proof.

i. Proof of what? Jesus deity.

ii. **Romans 6:23 (ESV) — 23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

iii. Exposition

1. Since we all sin, we all deserve to die, and stay dead.
2. Since Jesus never sinned, death could not hold him down.
3. How was he able not to sin? He was God.
4. Sure, others rose from the grave in the Bible, but they rose because God raised them, not because death could not hold them.

iv. **Romans 1:3–4 (ESV) — 3** concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh **4** and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

v. Exposition

1. Jesus was the son of God, equal with the Father and the Spirit before the resurrection.
2. So, what is going on in verse 4, when Paul says that Jesus “was declared to be the son of God in power,” when the Spirit raised him from the grave?
3. The resurrection of Jesus Christ, declared to the world, that Jesus was who he said he was. It was a public declaration of what many already knew—he the son of God. The resurrection proved it, demonstrated it, or declared it.

vi. Illustration

1. I lift weights a few mornings a week. I hate it, but I do it for health.
2. If I said to you that I bench pressed 450 pounds last week, what would you probably say? Prove it.
3. What if I could produce 15 witnesses and four iPhone videos? Expand...
4. Then you would probably believe me. Why? The proof!
5. The resurrection is the proof that Jesus is the son of God.

vii. Application

1. If he is God, then what he says is true.
2. He says that the Bible is the word of God!
3. He says that he is the only mediator between God and man!
4. He says that he is the only way to God!
5. He says that he is the only source of living water!
6. He says that heaven and hell are real!
7. He says that he can forgive all our sins and reconcile us to God.
8. Why is Jesus the most influential person to ever live? He rose from the dead, proving he is God.

viii. *First, the resurrection results in proof.*

c. **Second, the resurrection results in justification.**

- i. **Romans 4:23–25 (ESV) — 23** But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, **24** but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, **25** who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.
- ii. Exposition.
 1. What does it mean to be justified?
 - a. To be justified means to be declared righteous, even though we are not. Luther said, we are “simul justus et peccator.”
 - b. When discussing justification, we usually and rightfully talk about Christ’s life and death.
 2. But what about his resurrection?
 - a. Romans 4:25 says that Jesus was “raised for our justification.”
 3. What does this mean?
 - a. We need to understand that when God raised Christ from the dead, God was declaring Jesus to be righteous.
 - b. God was declaring that Jesus was perfect.
 - c. Because he was perfectly righteous death could not hold him.

d. When he rose from the grave, God was telling the world with a loud voice, “My son is righteous, and my son has always been righteous.”

4. How in the world does this affect us?
 - a. We need to understand union with Christ. Explain...

iii. Illustration

1. My wife gave birth to five boys.
2. Which means that she carried a child in her womb for nine months five times.
3. During that nine-month pregnancy, the fetus was connected to my wife by an inseparable, deeply profound, and physical union.
4. As a result, everything my wife did, the baby did.
 - a. If she went for a walk, the baby went for a walk.
 - b. If she had Doritos and diet coke for lunch...
 - c. If she won the lottery...
 - d. If she went to prison...
 - e. If she was released from prison...
5. Everything my wife experienced, the child in her womb experienced. Why? They were united to each other.

iv. Application

1. In a similar sense, if you are a Christian, you are united to Christ by faith.
2. Which means when the father declared him righteous, the father declared you righteous.
3. How righteous? As righteous as his own son.
4. This means that God sees you as righteous as his own son.
5. This means that you don't have to earn your own righteousness, it has already been earned for you.
6. Since God declares you righteous, you have access to God.
7. What are you deeply ashamed of you this morning? If you are a Christian, God does not count that sin against you. He sees you as righteous as his own son.

- v. *The resurrection results in proof.*
- vi. *The resurrection results in justification.*

d. Third, the resurrection results in power.

i. Power for what? Supernatural Christian living

ii. **Ephesians 1:18–20 (ESV)** — **18** having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, **19** and what is 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,

iii. **Romans 8:11 (ESV)** — **11** If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

iv. Exposition

1. Remember, we are union with Christ.
2. Since Christ rose from the grave, we rose with him.
3. Now, that same supernatural, death destroying, resurrection power is ours.
4. Christ has given us resurrection power to say no to sin, utilize spiritual gifts, and to witness to our friends.

v. Application

1. Although we have that power inside of us, we often forget to access it.
2. How do we access it?
 - a. We engage in spiritual breathing (Bill Bright).
 - b. We breathe out sin.
 - c. We breathe in power. In one sense, we already have the power...
3. What are you currently struggling with?
 - a. Discouragement?
 - b. Ungodly fear?
 - c. Lack of self-control?
 - d. Anger?
 - e. A critical spirit?
4. God has given you access to resurrection power!!!

- vi. *The resurrection results in proof.*
 vii. *The resurrection results in justification.*
 viii. *The resurrection results in power.*

e. **Fourth, the resurrection results in hope.**

i. **Hope of what? Hope of resurrection.**

ii. **1 Corinthians 15:19–23 (ESV) — 19** If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. **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. **23** But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

iii. Exposition

1. Twice, Paul mentions that Jesus Christ is the firstfruits (20,23).
2. What are the firstfruits? The firstfruits are a portion of the crop that ripens before the rest of the crop. The firstfruits are the first installment of the harvest. If you go to green bluff and find some amazing Honey Crisp apples in mid-September, you are guaranteed to have an amazing harvest of Honey Crisps in mid-October.
3. The firstfruits are a foretaste and a guarantee of things to come.
4. The firstfruits were like a down payment or earnest money. They guarantee further payment in the future.

iv. Illustration

1. I met Heidi klubberud when I was a sophomore in college. I did not take me long to realize that she was the one. A short time later I started ring shopping. I was advised to buy a big engagement ring since you only buy an engagement ring

once. I could not afford a big engagement ring since I was a poor college student, so I financed one...

2. To convince the bank to give me a loan for an engagement ring I had to make a down payment. A down payment is a way of guaranteeing the bank that you will pay the loan off. Ladies, don't worry, I paid the loan off before we got married.
3. A down payment is a guarantee.

v. Application

1. In a similar sense the resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's down payment to us. It is the firstfruits guaranteeing our resurrection.
2. Maybe you are thinking—the resurrection is a nice idea.
3. But is it really going to happen? How can we be sure?
4. According to Paul, since Christ's resurrection is the firstfruits our resurrection is guaranteed.
5. This means we must not wallow in hopelessness.
6. What causes hopelessness? Maybe you are...
 - a. In debt.
 - b. Lonely.
 - c. Broke...
 - d. Depressed...
 - e. Discouraged by the news...
 - f. Discouraged by the direction of our country...
 - g. In physical pain...
 - h. Stressed about work...
 - i. Unreconciled to your spouse, parents, siblings, or old friend...
7. Since Christ rose, you are guaranteed to rise. Which means the best is yet to come!!! Which mean you can have hope regardless of your circumstances.

f. The resurrection results in several amazing benefits, but these benefits don't apply to everyone, which brings us to the last heading.

- i. The reality of the resurrection.*
- ii. The results of the resurrection.*

3. The recipients of the resurrection

a. **Who are the recipients of resurrection blessings? Only those who believe.**

b. **Romans 10:9–10 (ESV) — 9** because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **10** For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

c. Exposition

- i. Do you believe in your heart that God raised Christ from the dead? If so, you will be saved.
- ii. This raises the obvious question—what does it mean to believe in one's heart?
- iii. What is saving faith?
 1. Knowledge
 2. Assent

3. Trust

d. Illustration

- i. A story is told about a burning building in New York City's Harlem. There a blind girl was perched on the fourth-floor window. The firemen had become desperate. They couldn't fit the ladder truck between the buildings, and they couldn't get her to jump into a net, which she, of course, couldn't see.
- ii. Finally, her father arrived and shouted through the bull horn that there was a net and that she was to jump on his command. The girl jumped and was so completely relaxed that she did not break a bone or even strain a muscle in the four-story fall. Because she trusted her father completely, when she heard her father's voice, she did what he asked her to do. (Michal Green, Illustrations book, 1989).
- iii. This is saving faith...
 1. It sounds like a "blind leap" literally.
 2. Here is why it is not...
 - a. Why did she jump?
 - b. She knew her father.
 - c. She knew what her dad said.
 - d. She agreed that what her dad said was true.
 - e. Then she trusted her dad and jumped.
 - f. She could have said, "Dad, I know what you are saying, and I agree that it is true, but I'm not going to jump."

3. Her faith saved her life, because it included knowledge, assent, and trust.

e. Application:

- i. Is this the faith that you possess?
- ii. No other faith saves.
- iii. Faith is more than believing facts.
- iv. Faith is stepping out and trusting God entirely with our lives.
- v. This is real faith.
- vi. This is the only type of faith that brings all the benefits of the resurrection.

4. Conclusion

- a. Why is Jesus Christ the most influential person to ever live? He rose from the dead. To help us understand this claim, we examined-
 - i. *The reality of the resurrection.*
 - ii. *The results of the resurrection.*
 - iii. *The recipients of the resurrection.*
- b. There are probably two types of people present this morning.
 - i. The skeptics
 - ii. The saints
- c. The skeptics
 - i. So glad you came....
 - ii. I get it, bodily resurrections don't happen often.
 - iii. But the evidence for the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is overwhelming.

- iv. If there is even the slightest possibility that what I'm saying is true, then you owe it to yourself to examine the evidence.
- v. Why? If Christ rose from the grave and you don't submit to him, you are in deep trouble.
- vi. Let me know if you would like some free resources to examine the evidence for the resurrection in much more detail.

d. The saints

- i. Saints (by saints, I mean all Christians) this easter, you can rejoice and be exceedingly glad. Why?
- ii. Since Christ rose,
 - 1. You will be justified!
 - 2. You have resurrection power!
 - 3. Nothing can kill your hope!
- iii. Let's pray...