

The Resurrection of Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] Well, Easter tells the world that Jesus rose from death. And so as a church, we celebrate that Jesus is alive, not just today on Easter Sunday, but every Sunday we want to celebrate the reality of the resurrection.

And we do so not simply because the resurrection of Jesus is an event in past history, but we celebrate because the resurrection of Jesus impacts our lives right now, our present lived experience, but it also impacts our future.

And so the resurrection changes everything for everybody in this world. And the resurrection can shape every aspect of our lives as it helps us face the inevitability of our death.

The statistics are that one out of one dies. So that's all of us. So the resurrection of Jesus has an impact and a relevance for us.

And so Christianity will always be relevant as long as there are people on this planet. And as we die and before Jesus comes, it's relevant for all people in all places at all times.

[1 : 1 4] And so Mark's account of the resurrection here in chapter 16 that we just read, in it we not only get the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus, but we're forced to consider the challenge of the resurrection for our lives, just as those who were there on that first Easter Sunday, their lives were also challenged by what they discovered in the resurrection of Jesus.

And so I'd like us to look at two simple points this afternoon. The first one is the evidence for the resurrection, and the second is the challenge of the resurrection.

The evidence for the resurrection and a challenge for the resurrection. So earlier on, Mark had recorded how Jesus died. Now he records the news that Jesus has risen.

But he doesn't just make this astounding claim. What he does is he outlines the evidence for it. And there are at least three things worthy of note.

And the three things are the woman eyewitnesses, the empty tomb, and the predicted outcome. And so we'll look at each of those three lines of evidence as we move through this passage.

[2 : 2 7] So first, the woman eyewitnesses. In verse 1 and 2, we read, Notice the names of the women who are mentioned.

So there's Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. So these women were the first eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus. And all the Gospels have the women as the first eyewitnesses.

So in Mark's Gospel, he says, chapter 15, verse 40, that these are the three women who saw Jesus die. Then Mark chapter 15, verse 47, again, and he gives us their names.

These are the three women who saw where Jesus was buried. And then now into chapter 16, verse 1, 2, and 3. These are the three women who are the first witnesses to the resurrection.

But here's the thing. None of them were expecting Jesus to come back to life, were they? That's why they went to the tomb with spices. Why would you go to the tomb of a dead person with spices?

[3 : 48] Well, the reason was they wanted to anoint the dead body of Jesus. But they made a shocking discovery because Jesus wasn't there.

Verse 5. And so these women played a pivotal role as the first eyewitnesses to the resurrection. Now, it might not mean much to us now, what's the significance of the woman?

But it was significant back then because women were not regarded as reliable witnesses. They could not even give testimony in court. So why does it matter?

Well, it matters because if you're going to make this stuff up, if you're going to fabricate the story of the resurrection, you would never dream of using women as your main witnesses.

Because you'd be shooting yourself in the foot. And so the only possible reason to explain why the women were the eyewitnesses is because they were there and they reported what had happened.

[4 : 52] But naming the women specifically is important for another reason. Because by the time that Mark's gospel was in circulation, which was not long after these events, the death and the resurrection of Jesus, these women would still be around and so could verify what Mark was saying and claiming in his gospel.

And so you could ask them whether they saw Jesus live, die, be buried and rise to life again. And they could verify whether what Mark was saying in his gospel was true.

Because when there are lots of witnesses, lies don't tend to gather much momentum, do they? There are plenty of people around to say what the truth actually is.

And so what's being claimed about the resurrection of Jesus by Mark in his gospel could be fact-checked. That's why he gives the names of the people, so you can go and check it out for yourself.

So that's the first piece of evidence, the first line of evidence, the woman eyewitnesses. But the next and more significant line of evidence is, of course, the empty tomb.

[6 : 01] Verse 4 and verse 5 say, But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side.

And they were alarmed. So the large stone was rolled away, and Jesus wasn't there. And it was an unexpected and a shocking discovery because the empty tomb pointed to the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's why this young man dressed in white, an angel, said to them in verse 6, Don't be alarmed, he said. You're looking for Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified.

He has risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid him. So the crucified Jesus was no longer dead. He had risen. Death couldn't hold him, and the tomb was empty.

And so the empty tomb really is the knockdown argument for the reality of the resurrection of Jesus. It was empty because Jesus was alive. And so if Jesus had not risen, there would be no Christianity.

[7 : 13] There would be no good news. There would be no message to proclaim. There would be no hope for our lives or for this world. But Christianity is good news for the world because Jesus rose from the dead.

And so the Christian message is based on this explosive event, the resurrection of Jesus. So we can trust the reality of the resurrection because of the evidence of the empty tomb.

Not just the empty tomb, but also the woman eyewitnesses. So the woman eyewitnesses, the empty tomb are the two first lines of evidence Mark gives us. And then the third one is the predicted outcome.

Well, what is the predicted outcome? In verse 7, we read, But go, tell his disciples and Peter he is going ahead of you into Galilee.

There you will see him just as he told you. So we'll explore this more in our next point. But see what this angel, this man dressed in white, is saying.

[8 : 18] He's reminding them that Jesus actually said that he would rise from the dead. He predicted it. Jesus said he would see them again. Jesus had predicted his death on many occasions.

And so Mark records for us what Jesus said about his death. But along with predicting his death, Jesus also predicted his resurrection. And it's just that nobody, but nobody was expecting the resurrection to happen.

And so if you track back in Mark chapter 8, verse 31, we read that Jesus said he must be killed and after three days rise again.

It's a prediction. Mark chapter 9, verse 31, Jesus said the Son of Man, referring to himself, would be killed. And after three days he will rise.

Then in Mark chapter 10, verse 33 and 34, again Jesus said the Son of Man will be killed and three days later he will rise.

[9 : 21] And in Mark chapter 14, verse 28, Jesus said, but after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee. So Mark is saying to us, do you see this predicted outcome?

Jesus was killed just like he said he would be. Jesus was raised just like he said he would be. And Jesus said he would go ahead of his disciples into Galilee where he'd meet them just like he said he would.

And so the resurrection is the predicted outcome of what Jesus had repeatedly said to his disciples. And despite these multiple predictions, his resurrection still catches everybody by surprise.

That's why none of his apostles show up on the third day. The women were there, of course. But even then when they arrived, they weren't expecting to find a risen Jesus.

They expected to find a dead Jesus. Even for his apostles, nobody seemed to be curious enough to think back to some of the things he said and taught and wondered, well, maybe we should just go and check it out.

[10 : 35] Who knows? Nobody was thinking that Jesus would rise from the dead. And yet what's interesting is that Mark is not even trying to prove the resurrection.

His account doesn't even make mention of Jesus in it. Did you notice that? It's the account of the resurrection, but there's no Jesus.

And I think the reason is because Mark is expecting us to see all of these lines of evidence that he gives for the resurrection. And he wants us to put them together, to add them up, and to see how these lines of evidence lead us to the conclusion that Jesus is alive.

That Jesus, having been crucified, dead, and buried, rose again to life. And that's the truth we're meant to discover when we add all of these bits of evidence together.

And so if you're here this afternoon and you are a Christian believer, then you'll be convinced of this. And you'll want to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus because of what it means for you and for your future.

[11 : 46] But maybe you're here today and you wouldn't call yourself a Christian. Perhaps you're an unbeliever and you don't accept the resurrection. Well, if so, you need to come up with your own credible evidence as to why you think Jesus didn't rise from the dead.

That's a difficult thing to do. Or perhaps you're here and you're more of a skeptic and you can't really accept the resurrection. If so, then why don't you seriously consider the evidence for the resurrection for yourself?

Let the evidence guide you, not just to a plausible answer or to the best explanation, but to the obvious conclusion of what Mark and his gospel and all the other gospel writers and all the other authors of the New Testament are telling us.

That Jesus did die and that Jesus did rise again from death. So that's the evidence for the resurrection. But let's think about the challenge for the resurrection.

The challenge of the resurrection. So the evidence for the resurrection in history forces us to consider the challenge of the resurrection for our lives.

[13 : 05] Just like it did for those who first experienced it. Because as we read these words at the end of Mark's gospel, the resurrection clearly was a challenge for those who were there at the time.

Just look at the way Mark ends his gospel in verse 8. He says, I think the surprising ending here is supposed to provoke a response.

The resurrection obviously completely and utterly stunned the women who were there. They weren't expecting it. And yet the reality of the resurrection was so earth-shattering that it rocked them to the core.

No wonder they were afraid. Fear is an understandable reaction to what they had experienced, to what they'd seen and heard. And so Mark shows us how the women responded to the resurrection of Jesus.

In a sense, because he invites you and me to consider what our response is to the resurrection of Jesus. He's forcing us to come to our own conclusion on Jesus.

[14 : 25] On who Jesus says he is. And on what Jesus has done. And so with that in mind, let's consider the challenge of the resurrection just under three headings.

The resurrection challenges your mind. The resurrection challenges your heart. And the resurrection challenges your future. So first of all, the resurrection challenges your mind.

Just see how the women here respond to Jesus. They run away, trembling and bewildered. They said nothing to anyone because they were afraid.

That doesn't necessarily mean that the women didn't pass on the news of the resurrection to the apostles, but that they just didn't tell anyone else. Now think about it.

These women were the first eyewitnesses. And so the very fact that we are reading this afternoon an account of the resurrection indicates to us that these women didn't just keep quiet forever.

[15 : 29] These women must have moved from bewilderment about the resurrection to belief, to go and find the apostles, the disciples, and tell them what they had seen and heard.

And so no matter how inconceivable the resurrection seemed, they were convinced that it was true. There's no way that these women just fled from the tomb after what they'd experienced and went back to normal life and just forgot all about what had just happened after Jesus died.

So what shifted them from not expecting the resurrection to being bewildered and afraid and then to transmit the message of the resurrection to others?

Well, the only answer is what shifted them was the resurrection and the reality of it. And so you might be skeptical about the resurrection and think it's unbelievable, but yet you're in good company because that's exactly how these women felt when they first discovered the resurrection.

Because the first witnesses of the resurrection, it's clear, struggle to take it all in too. But the women let the evidence challenge their thinking and therefore change their minds.

[16 : 55] And so the question is, will you let the resurrection challenge your mind? Especially if you're still struggling to believe it or you're not sure about Christianity.

Surely the resurrection has got to make an impact on your thinking and your understanding. Because it was just as inconceivable to people back then as it is today.

And so we're not suggesting here that to become a Christian, you have to set your powers of reason aside before you can believe in Jesus. No, it is perfectly reasonable to believe in Jesus based on all that has happened.

One of the foremost scholars on the resurrection is a man called N.T. Wright who teaches New Testament. And he's written a book called The Resurrection of the Son of God.

It's about 900 pages, a good doorstopper book. And in it, he says this. He says, The early Christians did not invent the empty tomb or the meetings or sightings of the risen Jesus in order to explain a faith they already had.

[18 : 03] Nobody was expecting this kind of thing. No kind of conversion experience would have generated such ideas. Nobody would have invented it. To suggest otherwise is to stop doing history and to enter into a fantasy world of our own.

You see what he's saying? He's saying that you don't live in a fantasy world if you believe the resurrection. He's saying that you live in a fantasy world if you don't.

And so, of course, it's good to raise doubts and ask questions and try to discover the truth. But the resurrection of Jesus challenges our minds because it makes best sense of all the evidence.

So that's one thing. The resurrection of Jesus challenges your mind. Next, the resurrection of Jesus challenges your heart. See what the women were instructed to go and do there in verse 7.

But go, tell his disciples and Peter, he is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him just as he told you. So remember the last time that Jesus saw his disciples.

[19 : 15] It was when they had abandoned Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. But Jesus would see them again, we're told, in Galilee. And one disciple is singled out here for special mention.

It's Peter. Remember, Peter betrayed Jesus, denying that he even knew him, not once, not twice, but three times. And that's why the words, and Peter, are so beautiful.

It's because Jesus clearly didn't write Peter off. And this was also a promise that Peter would be forgiven and restored as a follower of Jesus.

Can you imagine how the disciples felt when this young man dressed in white, this angel, said to them that they would see Jesus again and go and tell Peter that he'll also see Jesus again because Jesus wants to meet him in Galilee.

Even though they had all deserted him, even though they had all denied him, Jesus is offering them grace. And the reason is, it's because through the death and resurrection of Jesus, our sins can be forgiven.

[20 : 28] And that Jesus will welcome us to himself. And so we might be wallowing in shame and self-pity because of what we've done or because of how we've lived.

Maybe even feeling, I could never go to Jesus to be forgiven because of what I have done. And yet the good news of the resurrection of Jesus gives hope to all of us.

It gives hope to these women. It gives hope to Peter. And it gives hope to you and to me. And when we grasp this hope that the resurrection gives to us, then it challenges our hearts because we discover that we are loved and accepted by Jesus despite what we are.

And knowing this gives us all we need to face all the challenges of life because we know that we belong to Jesus.

Through his death and through his resurrection, we can go to Jesus, we can find forgiveness, we're united to him, we belong to him, we're his, he loves us, he accepts us, he died for us.

[21 : 42] And so if that's the case, then it doesn't really matter what anybody else thinks about you. It doesn't matter what anybody else says about you. It doesn't matter how other people treat you.

Because if the Son of God gave his life for you, he loves you. He accepts you. You're his. And that's how the resurrection of Jesus transforms our hearts.

Peter got another chance. Jesus used Peter in his service. And Jesus will use us despite our failures. So the resurrection of Jesus challenges your mind, it challenges your heart, and the resurrection of Jesus challenges your future.

Look again at verse 6. See what the angel told the woman. He said, don't be alarmed. Then in verse 7, he says, but go. Go, because the risen Lord Jesus says you don't need to be worried about anything.

Don't be alarmed, the angel says, because the resurrection of Jesus means we've got nothing to fear. Nothing to fear right now in life, and nothing to fear in the future.

[22 : 57] Of course, one day we will die, but even death can't touch those who belong to Jesus. Because when Jesus smashed through death, he opened up the door of eternal life for us.

George Herbert, the poet, said, death used to be an executioner, but the gospel has made him just a gardener. I love that. The gospel has made death just a gardener.

What does a gardener do? Plant seeds. What does it give? New life. And that's what the resurrection of Jesus does for us. Death is not the end of our life.

It is the door that opens up eternal life for us. And because the resurrection of Jesus gives us hope to face our greatest enemy, death itself, then of course it gives us the resources to face everything else in life that comes our way, whatever it might be.

Because in Jesus, the Christian believer has this indistinguishable hope because of the resurrection. So can you see how the resurrection doesn't just challenge your mind?

[24 : 11] It doesn't just challenge your heart. But the resurrection challenges your life right now and also your future. I love the story of Donald Gray Barnhouse who was a former minister of 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia in the United States.

His wife tragically died of cancer in her late 30s and left him with four children under the age of 12. And one day when he was driving with his children, I think he was on the way to the funeral of his wife after her death, a large truck pulled past their car and the shadow of the truck just went over the top of them and it became dark momentarily.

And so Barnhouse asked his children, would you rather be run over by the truck or by the shadow of the truck? What do you think? His children answered. Of course, the shadow, they said.

And then so their dad concluded, well, that's what has happened to your mother. only the shadow of death has passed over her because death itself ran over Jesus.

And that's what Easter reminds us, that Jesus died for us. And so through his death and his subsequent resurrection, death can't touch you or me when we believe in Jesus.

[25 : 41] His death and resurrection changes everything for you, for me, and for our world. And so the question as we conclude is simply this, has the resurrection of Jesus changed you, your mind, your heart, your future?

Because everything hinges on how we respond to the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. Christ. That's why there is nothing more urgent in life because we all face death.

There's nothing more urgent in life for us than to turn away from our sin because that's why Jesus came and died on a cross, to turn from our sin and to turn and trust in Jesus.

Trusting in him, trusting that because he lived and died and rose again, we too, through being united to Jesus, also have that hope to look forward to resurrection life.

Life in all its fullness now, but everlasting life to come. All because of his resurrection from the dead. moment. coming to vlogging in salvation by his resurrection and in time to enjoy actually Eddie and together with va Titanic where he times areencies they are