

The Resurrection of Christ

Valleys Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 5th April 2015

Intro

- 'The resurrection of Jesus Christ is either one of the most wicked, vicious, heartless hoaxes ever foisted on the minds of human beings--or it is the most remarkable fact of history'. - Josh McDowell

Read John 20:1-18

The Evidence for it

To those who say: 'Maybe Jesus didn't die'

- Beaten with rods whilst blindfolded, crown of thorns.
- Roman flogging- cat o' nine tails.
- Length walked whilst carrying the heavy cross- a couple of football pitches.
- Crucifixion- nature of it. Roman soldiers made sure you were dead or they would be punished.
- Breaking leg bones speeded up death as the victim could not push up any more to inhale. Jesus was already dead when they came to Him.
- A spear in the side proved this- blood and water came out- (medical proof of death)- clot separates from serum.

To those who say: 'Jesus escaped tomb or disciples stole body'

- Body wrapped in linen cloths, anointed with oils which would set like a cast on a broken limb. Through the wrappings- cocoon. Bandages round pencil. John believed when he saw the wrappings undisturbed where they were left- John 20:5-8. The linen strips on the ground, but the head cloth folded up on it's own (like someone making their bed when they rise).
- Massive stone rolled over entrance to tomb (Joseph of Arimathea provided the tomb, a Sanhedrin member and a secret follower of Jesus). Couldn't move it from inside even if tried- probably in a groove and needed to push from one side. Women knew it weighed tons and wondered who would move it for them (maybe afraid to ask the guards).
- Guards posted 24-hr duty to guard the tomb & seal placed over the stone to prevent any tampering. Even if Jesus had not have died first he would have needed to be a bit more than a Houdini to get out of this one. A rescue attempt also seems unlikely as the male disciples had fled for fear of the authorities.
- Stone moved away by angel. Angels appeared to soldiers and they were so afraid they fell down as if dead. Soldiers went straight away and told the Jewish leaders and got protection. Told to make up a story of the disciples stealing the body. The Jews knew that something had taken place, but they could not refute the facts (Matt. 28:15). This shows Matthew's honesty in exposing the only explanation attempted by Christ's enemies.

To those who say: 'Maybe people just hallucinated & thought they saw Jesus'

- The same hallucination is unlikely to be shared by different people and over a long period of time.
- From the various places where the resurrection is mentioned in Scripture we can piece together an incredible number of eye witnesses

1. Mary Magdalene (7demons), shortly after his resurrection. (Mark 16:9; John 20:11-18.)
2. The women returning from the empty tomb. (Matthew 28:8-10.)

3. Two disciples on the road to Emmaus. (Mark 16:12,13; Luke 24:13-35.)
4. Peter. (Luke 24:34, 1 Corinthians 15:5.)
5. His disciples, in Jerusalem-Thomas is absent. (Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23.)
6. His disciples, in Jerusalem-Thomas is present. (John 20:24-29.)
7. His disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. (Matthew 28:16; John 21:1,2.)
8. **500** believers at one time. (1 Corinthians 15:6.). Over 500 at one time in itself strongly refutes theory that they hallucinated.
9. James. **His brother, and author of the book of James, who was formerly an unbeliever.** (1 Corinthians 15:7).
10. His disciples on a mountain in Galilee. (Matthew 28:16-20.)
11. His disciples, blesses them, and ascends into heaven. (Luke 24:50-53.)
12. Paul, on the road to Damascus. **Who formerly was an unbeliever and persecuted the Church, but became a great witness for Christ and wrote many letters in scripture.** (Acts 9:3-6; 1 Corinthians 15:8.)

- Of note are the hostile witnesses- James and Paul.
- Most of the disciples died as martyrs for witnessing to the resurrection- why would someone be prepared to die for a lie?

Charles Colson served as special counsel to President Richard Nixon. He was also a co-conspirator in the infamous Watergate cover-up. As a result, Colson pleaded guilty to the crime of obstruction of justice and did time in a federal prison. With the Watergate scandal unfolding, Colson began a soul quest that concluded with a commitment to Jesus Christ. Later, as he began to ponder one of the fundamentals of the Christian faith -- the resurrection -- Colson found his conspiracy experience to be most enlightening. Reflecting on the Watergate scandal Colson writes: With the most powerful office in the world at stake, a small band of hand-picked loyalists, no more than ten of us, could not hold a conspiracy together more than two weeks.... Yet even the prospect of jeopardizing the President we'd worked so hard to elect, of losing the prestige, power, and personal luxury of our offices was not enough incentive to make this group of men contain a lie. Nor, as I reflect today, was the pressure really all that great.... There was certain to be keen embarrassment; at the worst, some might go to prison; though that possibility was by no means certain. But no one was in grave danger; no one's life was at stake.... This is why the Watergate experience is so instructive for me. If John Dean and the rest of us were so panic stricken, not by the prospect of beatings and execution, but by political disgrace and a possible prison term, one can only speculate about the emotions of the disciples. Unlike men in the White House, the disciples were powerless people, abandoned by their leader, homeless in a conquered land. Yet they clung tenaciously to their enormously offensive story that their leader had risen from his ignoble death and was alive -- and was the Lord.... Take it from one who was inside the Watergate web, who saw firsthand how vulnerable a cover-up is: Nothing less than a witness as awesome as the resurrected Christ could have caused those men to maintain to their dying whispers that Jesus is alive and the Lord.

- Jesus appeared over a **40 day period**, and on many occasions. Ate with them, cooked breakfast. Jesus appeared to His contemporaries offering them "many infallible proofs" that He was alive (Acts 1:3).
 - To those who say: 'Maybe people just hallucinated & thought they saw Jesus'

Other Proofs- Enemies could not refute it

- His enemies could not deny it. All the opponents of Christianity needed to do to stop it was display the body of Christ, but they could not- the tomb was empty!
The pyramids of Egypt are famous because they contained the mummified bodies of ancient Egyptian kings. Westminster Abbey in London is renowned, because in it rests the bodies of English nobles and notables. Mohammed's tomb is noted for the stone coffin and the bones it contains. The Garden Tomb of Jesus is famous because it is empty!
- Fifty days after the resurrection, Peter openly preached the resurrection to the Jews from fifteen countries, without any hint of refutation. Three thousand Jews became believers in Christ (Acts 2:14, 24, 31-36).
- Paul preached the resurrection to Festus, the governor, and King Agrippa, without refutation (Acts 25:19, 26:23-26).

Other Proofs- Deaths of the witnesses

- Most of Jesus' followers laid down their lives for their testimony of Christ. All but one of the disciples died for their faith and even John who died of old age was put into a vat of boiling oil, but delivered out of this by God.

Other Proofs- Historical proof- Sunday became THE common day of worship

- Sunday (the day Jesus rose) became the new day of worship for the believing Jews- this is an amazing testimony that something radical had taken place!

Other Proofs- Changed lives

- Changed lives then and today.

It proves His claims

- Jesus claimed to be God in the flesh- He received worship, used God's name 'I AM', forgave people's sins against God, and accepted Thomas' statement that Jesus was his 'Lord and God'.
- It's one thing to claim to be God and another to prove it. Jesus proved it by the amazing sinless life He led, His amazing teaching, His amazing miracles and healings and by raising people from the dead. However, as ultimate proof he gave one key sign, which He spoke about before hand- He would rise from the dead on the third day. He predicted this on a number of occasions- the 'sign of Jonah', the sign of 'destroy this temple and in 3 days I will rebuild it', but also on many occasions He predicted His resurrection to the disciples. It was also predicted a number of times in the Old Testament.
- He was declared to be God's Son (i.e. divine) through the resurrection:
'He was shown to be the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit.' (Rom 1:4)
- The resurrection is unique as the greatest miraculous sign ever done. It sets Christianity above all the religions of the world. Josh McDowell, 'Evidence that demands a verdict' says:

"All but four of the major world religions are based on mere philosophical propositions. Of the four that are based on personalities rather than a philosophical system, only Christianity claims an empty tomb for its founder. Abraham, the founder of Judaism, died about 1900 BC but no resurrection was ever claimed for him. The original accounts of Buddha never ascribe to him any such thing as resurrection; in fact, in the earliest accounts of his death, we read that when Buddha died it was "with that utter passing away in which nothing whatever remains behind." There is no trace in the Pali scriptures or commentaries of Sakya Muni having existed after his death or appearing to his disciples. Mohammed died, June 8th 632 A.D. at the age of 61, in the city of Medina where his tomb is visited annually by thousands of devout Muslims. All the millions of Jews, Muslims and Buddhists agree that their founders have never come up out of the dust of the earth in resurrection."

- 1Cor 15:14 'If Christ is not risen.. our preaching is empty'- i.e. not true, but as Christ is risen it vindicates the truth of the gospel, it confirms all of Christ's teaching (particularly His claims to be God). Paul later speaks of the futility of being baptised into someone who is dead- v29 i.e. Why identify with someone's teaching and lifestyle (baptism was all to do with identification) if that person is now dead? Paul had said previously that the Jewish Fathers were baptised into Moses (1Cor 10:2) and that Christians were baptised by one spirit into one body (Christ- see 1Cor 12:13), people were also baptised under John to signify their identification with John's message of repentance prior to receiving Christ's teaching. What would be the point of it if Moses was now dead or if John was now dead or Christ was now dead? If so, we might as well forget their teaching as it has not led to life. However, both Moses ('God shall raise up a prophet like me from among your own people- you must listen to Him') and John ('behold the lamb of God') pointed people to Christ as the only way to life.

It shows our sins are forgiven

- Mary Magdalene- probably from Magdala (by Sea of Galilee) but could be a nickname (elegant, great, magnificent, tower). Mary was probably not the sinful woman mentioned in Luke 7. However, Mary had 7 demons cast out of her by Jesus- that was a foretaste of God's healing, but now she could see that the sacrifice Jesus paid on the cross for her sins had been accepted by God the Father. If she had not met the risen Jesus she would have been left wondering 'was it

enough?'

- She was asked to tell the good news of the resurrection to the apostles who had fled leaving Christ to die, and he calls them 'brothers'. In Mark 16:7 she was amongst the women who had seen an angel in the tomb asking them to tell the disciples and especially Peter that Jesus was risen. Peter denied Christ 3 times, so this was a powerful witness to her that sins were indeed forgiven by God.
- Application- Are you struggling to believe God has forgiven you for something you have done? If God the Father will not bring it up anymore who are we to? Get into a habit of not bringing it up again once you have confessed it to God- receive His forgiveness now. 1 cross+3nails=4given. A group of Moravian missionaries once decided to take the message of God to the Eskimos. One of their struggles in teaching the Eskimos was that they could not find a word in the Eskimo language for forgiveness. Finally, they had to compound a phrase to use in the place of forgiveness. This compound phrase turned out to be *issumagijoungnainermik*. It's a formidable looking assembly of letters, but the expression has a beautiful connotation for those who understand that it means "not being able to think about it anymore."
- Christ was handed over to death to deal with our sins and raise in order to effect our justification. (Rom 4:25)
- If Christ is not raised then we are still in our sins:
'If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is empty, and your faith also is empty.... if Christ has not been raised your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.' (1Cor 14:14, 17)
- How would we know if the sacrifice for our sins was successful or not if Christ had not risen from the dead?
- V 17 'still in your sins' -It proves our sins have been taken away by Christ's sacrifice- i.e. God the Father has accepted Christ's sacrifice on our behalf- otherwise how would we know if the sacrifice of Christ has been enough for us? It would be unjust for Jesus to have to die again or for Jesus to die and for us still to be punished- God will not punish twice over- that is unjust. So stop punishing yourself. He has FULLY paid for your sins and the resurrection is God the Father's acceptance of it on your behalf! This is good news! Christ was handed over to death to deal with our sins and raised in order to effect our justification. (Rom 4:25)]
- No sin is too bad to be forgiven- blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is seen in extreme hardening of heart where we deny the cross and see it as the work of the devil. Someone in this position does not even want to be forgiven or see the need.
- If God forgives us we must accept it- the bill is paid. See yourself as God does. You are now a saint, not a sinner. See yourself as a saint because that is what you are- 1Cor 1:2 'To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours'

It shows the reality and nature of our resurrections

- **It proves we too will be raised-v11,v18**
- Turned her from depths of sorrow to greatest joy. Death is the ultimate sorrow and she had witnessed the crucifixion when many of the men had fled, and also the burial. Now she would be the first to witness the permanent (not just temporary) resurrection from the dead.
- Mary did not recognise it was the Lord. Me being unrecognised when hair cut. Our resurrection bodies- perfected yet still us. Road to Emmaus- didn't recognise Him
- Jesus delayed revealing who He was to bless her more- just as we do with surprises. 'Whom do you seek?'- He does not ask for His benefit but for hers- so she can share her heart. Like 'Adam where are you?'- so he could confess his sin. Like 'Whom do you seek?' just a few days ago when He was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane- giving them the chance to change their minds ('I am'- used the title of God from burning bush & soldiers fell back as though dead). Then one word 'Mary'!
- I am ascending to my father and your father- v17- calls us brothers from here onwards- we will share our brother's reward- resurrection and ascension. Read Rom 8:11

- Application- Do you worry about death? Let this account reassure you as it did Mary. Just as Jesus knew Mary so well, so also He knows us and will one day call our name to be with Him. Martin Luther: "We shall sleep until he comes and knocks at the tomb and says: 'Dr. Martin, get up!' Then in one moment I will get up and I will rejoice with him in eternity." **If you have doubts look into the facts again and believe.** Book by Gail Giorgio claims Elvis is still alive and grows beards to be unrecognized. Has been sighted in a Burger King in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Book includes a tape by Elvis. **John saw the cloths and believed (better than Houdini- the great escapologist)- Jesus went through the cloth. However, Apostles told to go to Gallilee where Jesus would meet them but they were rooted to Jerusalem due to unbelief and grief, so Jesus had to appear to them in Jerusalem first. They refused to believe the testimony of Mary.** On the Isle of Capri in the Bay of Naples, members of the local Christian parish have a traditional ceremony every Easter which is a powerful symbol of all that Christ's Resurrection means. Each family gathering for the early Sunday morning Easter celebration carries a bird cage. The crowded church and the plaza outside are jammed with the people of Capri carrying cages. After the benediction all of the cages are opened and the birds are released to the gleeful shouts that Christ has risen!
- **It guarantees our resurrection- 'Firstfruits'**
- 1Cor 15:20-23 says 'But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the **first-fruits** of them that are asleep'
- Firstfruits means there are more of the same to come! Firstfruits commanded in Lev 23:9-14 & Num 28:26-31. When they came into Israel & had their own fields they were to take the first part of the harvest (marked start of the 2 month spring harvest). Grain taken from the harvest and 5.1 pints of grain ground and offered at the temple to God. More significantly the priest was to take a sheaf of the grain and wave it before God in the temple. This was to be done on the day after the Sabbath of the passover. Therefore if the passover was on a Monday it would be nearly a week later on the Sunday. However, if passover happened on a Friday, then it would be presented to God on the third day. It just so happened that Jesus died on the passover to fulfill it, actually on a Friday, so that when Jesus rose from the dead He also fulfilled the firstfruit feast, literally on the same day (the Sunday after the Sabbath- i.e. The 3rd day after the passover). Difference between the other resurrections in scripture by Jesus (e.g Lazarus), and that happen now- Jesus first to get His NEW body never to die again!
- We shall have physical resurrection bodies like His:

And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. 1Cor 15:49

'who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (Philippians 3:21)

'For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.' (Romans 8:29)

1Cor 6:14 And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. (Rom 8:11)

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- v44 'It is sown a natural body it is raised a spiritual body'
- Paul uses pictures to illustrate how the resurrection body shall be different to our bodies as they are now. There will be a contrast, just as we see in nature to a lesser extent now. A seed planted looks different to a fully grown plant-v37. People are different to animals and fish and birds-v39. The heavenly bodies appear different to earthly things. There is a contrast between the light given as it appears to us from the sun compared to the moon and stars. In the same way our heavenly bodies will be a stark contrast to our earthly bodies.
- Examples of the contrasts will be the areas of : corruption/incorruption, dishonour/glory, weakness/power, natural/spiritual. Spiritual does not mean 'un-solid'- Jesus' resurrection body was solid, but it was heavenly

- We shall have physical resurrection bodies like His:
- **How Jesus looked.** He was recognisable but different- like someone you haven't seen for ages. Me with my hair/beard cut/dyed.
- He had scars- there was evidence it was the same person, but the wounds had healed- we will have perfect bodies.
- **The nature of His body- eternal.** He was raised never to die again, or age again.
- Reversal of entropy- the second law of thermodynamics. First law= amount of energy in universe is constant. 2nd law says the amount of useable energy for work is going down, and amount of useless forms of energy is increasing. I.e. Things in a closed off system will eventually decay and becoming less ordered and random unless an external force puts in the work necessary and breaks into the system. This is seen in all areas of life. Jesus has broken into the system of death and brought life.
- God will wipe every tear from our eyes. There will be no more pain, or curse, or sin, or sickness etc.
- The nature of His body- physical. Thought they'd seen a ghost at first. Why? Didn't expect to see Him. When else had this happened before He died? When Jesus walked on water- they thought it was His ghost. Jesus made it clear on these occasions He was not a ghost
- my parents when my mum had gone to loo & my dad did not realise & she got back into bed & he thought she was a ghost.
- People could touch Him. He ate. He sounded like Jesus. He had Jesus' knowledge- knew them and taught them. He had Jesus' character, personality.
- **The nature of His body- supernatural.** Could disappear- Emmaus road encounter- He disappeared before their eyes when He broke bread. Could appear even in locked rooms. Ascended into Heaven. Appeared in different form to different people.

It gives us resurrection power today

- Mary did'nt want to lose Jesus again. 'Do not hold onto me'- Jesus was leaving but would send the Holy Spirit to live in her. 'I will not leave you as orphans'.
- It means we have resurrection power in us
' I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. ' - (Eph 1:18-23)
- Rom 8- Law of spirit of life sets us free from law of sin and death- the Holy Spirit in us empowers us to obey God. Sanctification. Gal 5- the fruit of the Spirit.
- Jesus took the penalty of sin on the cross and demonstrated power over sin on our behalf by rising from the dead- sin no longer has power over Him because sin and death are partners in crime and Jesus cannot die again, He has conquered it
- In the same way we are to regard sin as conquered in us- defeated once and for all, and live like we believe it is true.- Read Rom 6:1-14- reckon yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord- i.e. Our flesh was nailed to the cross and we are no longer to consider sin to be influencing us, in the same way as it cannot influence Christ anymore- we are to consider ourselves like Christ to be outside of sin's jurisdiction.
- ' I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. ' - (Eph 1:18-23)
- Application- Are you struggling with a particular sin? Sometimes we feel powerless, but we are not powerless- Christ is in us. Start to believe that the power of that sin is broken. Start declaring and behaving like it is. . 'I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to us and 90 percent how we react to it.' Charles Swindol. "

- I am not what I might be, I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I wish to be, I am not what I hope to be. But I thank God I am not what I once was, and I can say with the great apostle, 'By the grace of God I am what I am.' -- John Newton, author of "Amazing Grace"
- **Rom 10:9 "if you believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you will be saved." - stop trusting in other things- good works, religion, ritual, comparisons, heritage, etc.**

Summary

- The Evidence for it
- It proves His claims
- It shows our sins are forgiven
- It shows the reality and nature of our resurrections
- It gives us resurrection power today

Song: He has risen