

# Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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## Easter Message (2019): He is not here, but is risen

When the annual Christian pilgrimage arrives this morning at the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem for their traditional Easter service, they're definitely not expecting to find the body of the Lord Jesus in it! Rather, they know the opposite is true. In fact, they're there to celebrate the glorious fact of His bodily resurrection out from among the dead. Hallelujah, Christ is risen!! Yes, we know Him as the living One, who died, but who now is alive for ever - the One who has the keys of death and hades (Revelation 1:18). When I went to Israel a few years ago on business, I'd forgotten about it being Passover time. I was therefore most surprised when, on the first day of Preparation for the Passover, the 4-star hotel I was staying in served up unleavened wafers for breakfast on paper plates and with disposable utensils. You see, I expected the opposite - that Israeli tourism would cater for western visitors - even though I knew the Rabbis dictated the prevailing Jewish culture. In this respect, I was just like the disciples on that first Easter morning. On numerous occasions, they'd been told the facts by Jesus, but the reality did not sink in. First, they were frightened by the sight of the angels (Luke 24:5). Second, they were shocked by the news they received, "*He is not here, but is risen*" (Luke 24:6, New King James Version).

So now I'll read, from the English Standard Version, Luke's account of that first Easter day. Remember that Joseph of Arimathea was followed to the tomb by women disciples, who were unable to anoint the body of Jesus because it was evening time and the start of the Sabbath (Luke 23:50-56). That's how Luke 23 ended. Luke 24 begins: "*But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, [the women] went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.'* And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them" (Luke 24:1-11).

Later that day Jesus appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-49). When their eyes were opened at the meal they shared with Him, they immediately returned to Jerusalem. Their news was so important that they couldn't wait until the next day! But, when they found the disciples, they were greeted with the words, "*The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!*" (Luke 24:34). Soon afterwards, the risen Lord joined the gathered company. "*As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, 'Peace to you!' But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.'* And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marvelling, he said to them, '*Have you anything here to eat?*' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them. Then he said to them, '*These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.'* Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, '*Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high*'" (Luke 24:36-49). What a thrill it is for us to be able to listen again to this account on this Easter Sunday of 2019!

Before I proceed with my talk, I'd like to bring to your attention some significant facts about Christ and the Christian gospel, which include His resurrection. We constantly need to remind ourselves of their importance to the Faith that we profess:

- John 1:14 states that the eternal Word became flesh - became a Man, Jesus the Christ.
- Acts 10:38 says that God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and that He went about doing good because God was with Him.

- John 19:33 states that the Roman soldiers found Jesus to be already dead, when they came to His cross. He had died of His own volition - He offered himself as a sacrifice for our sins. His life was not taken from Him by others (see John 10:17-18).

And Jesus rose again from the dead.

- I have already quoted Luke 24:34, *"The Lord has risen indeed"*;
- 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 state that *"Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; that he was then buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures; and that, thereafter, he appeared to many disciples on various occasions."*
- In Revelation 1:18, Jesus pronounced, *"I am ... the living one [who] died, and behold I am alive forevermore."*
- Ephesians 4:8 states that Jesus *"ascended on high"*, that is, He entered heaven as a Man.
- Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 8:1, Hebrews 10:12 and Hebrews 12:2 all highlight the fact that He sat down at the right hand of God, the Majesty on high.
- Ephesians 2:6 states that, spiritually, we're raised up with Him and seated with Him in the heavenlies.
- At the end of the Bible, in Revelation 22:20, Jesus said, *"Surely I am coming soon."* To which we respond, *"Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"*

To summarise the gospel, we can confidently assert that our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God is the Word become flesh, who was anointed with the Holy Spirit to do good; and that He really died but rose again and ascended into heaven, where He is alive for evermore. And we know that He will come again soon. And why do we have this confidence and hope? Because Christ is risen from among the dead! *"For if Christ has not been raised from the dead, then our preaching and our faith are both worthless. And if only we have hope in Christ in this life, then we are the most miserable of all men"* (see 1 Corinthians 15:14 and 1 Corinthians 15:19).

Now the remainder of my talk will be about Christ's resurrection, my headings for which will be an acrostic of the word **risen**:

- R:** Results;
- I:** Indications;
- S:** Statements (of facts);
- E:** Established; and
- N:** New

## 1. **R: Results**

The first and foremost result of Christ's resurrection is that death has been conquered. Death is the last and greatest enemy of mankind (1 Corinthians 15:26 and Hebrews 2:14-15). Everyone is poisoned with its venom, sin (1 Corinthians 15:56). As sinners, we're all too aware of sin's power and attractiveness. Our sinful nature causes us to desire those things which are expressly forbidden by God. When we yield to these desires, we sin. Death is the ultimate outcome of sinning. *"When [lust] has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death"* (James 1:15, New King James Version). The strength of sin is the law of God (1 Corinthians 15:56), which is conveniently forgotten these days by people who want to live selfishly. The triumph of the resurrection is exclaimed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:57 (English Standard Version): *"Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory [over sin and death] through our Lord Jesus Christ."* We triumph especially in the knowledge that His resurrection is the guarantee that death will be destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:26). And we have no fear of death because our Saviour has annulled its power. But there's victory now for believers over sin, once we realise that we have been freed from its dominion over us through Christ's death and resurrection (Romans 6:6-14). Yes, as we remember this Easter Day that He is risen, let's rejoice in these facts that sin shall not exercise its lordship over us because death no longer has any dominion over Christ. We know these things to be true because He, being raised out from among the dead, will never die again (Romans 6:14 and Romans 6:9).

Another important result of Christ's resurrection is pronounced in the message Paul preached in the synagogue in Antioch - that forgiveness of sins is proclaimed through the Man whom God raised up from the dead. Everyone who believes in Christ is justified from everything from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses (see Acts 13:37-39). In part of his exposition of the gospel, in Romans 4:25-5:2, Paul explained that Christ's resurrection establishes the fact that believers are right with God because our sins have been dealt with through His death on the cross. Fundamentally, our faith in God, who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, is credited to us as righteousness because we're justified by His blood. There are two important issues here. First, that Jesus was delivered for our trespasses and, second, that He was raised from the dead for our justification (see Romans 4:22-25).

Other results follow as a consequence of these two basic facts and that, by faith, we have been justified. They are: a settled relationship with God; being at peace with Him; the availability of His grace to us; and the knowledge that heaven is our destiny. *“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith [in God], we have peace with [him] through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us”* (Romans 5:1-5).

## 2. I: Indications

Whatever we think about the wonder of the resurrection of Christ Jesus our Lord and all the resultant blessings that are ours, we must never forget what God thinks about His Son. The Lord Jesus came into the world to do His Father’s will. *“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This [commandment] I have received from my Father”* (John 10:17-18). Hebrews 10:5-10 recount Jesus’ conversation with His Father over the necessity of His sacrifice for sin. In Christ’s resurrection, the Father has openly declared His pleasure in His Son’s obedience in fulfilling His will. Perhaps the well-known verses in Philippians 2 of the Father’s answer to this obedience will suffice to indicate this. *“Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Philippians 2:5-11). Yes, as we remember on this Easter day that He has risen, we also rejoice in the eternal fame, glory and honour which have been heaped upon Him by God the Father.

Furthermore, the resurrection of Christ indicates to us the greatness and glory of His Person.

In John 2:18-22, and in response to the demand of the Jews for Him to show them a sign, Jesus He told them to *“destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”* (John 2:19). They thought He meant the temple building in Jerusalem. He was actually talking about the temple of his body. The resurrection made this clear to His disciples. *“When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken”* (John 2:22, English Standard Version). Therefore, they confidently and fearlessly preached him in the very city in which He had been crucified. *“And with great power the apostles gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all”* (Acts 4:33, New King James Version). However, rather than being convinced by this sign, the Jews were *“greatly disturbed that [the disciples] taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead”* (Acts 4:2). Yes, as we remember this Easter day that He has risen, we also rejoice in the greatness and glory of the One who 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”* (Romans 1:4).

## 3. S: Statements (of facts)

The resurrection of Christ is key to many gospel truths. These were clearly stated by Peter, in his preaching on the day of Pentecost. He said that the apostles were witnesses to the fact that God had raised Jesus, whom the Jews had crucified, and had exalted Him to His right hand. *“Let all...therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified”* (Acts 2:36). As the Christ, He’s the Anointed Man, the One who has fulfilled all of the Old Testament promises made to Israel. But He’s also declared to be the *“Lord of all”* (Acts 10:36), the One to whom everyone must bow - either drawn in mercy or compelled by might (Philippians 2:11).

For believers, His Lordship has a very practical meaning for their lives. We’re to recognise His claims upon us now, as Paul explains in Romans 14:7-12. *“For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. ... For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’ So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.”* But our service for Him shouldn’t be out of fear of the coming assessment at His judgment seat (see 2 Corinthians 5:8-10). Rather it should arise out of love for Him. *“For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised”* (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

**4. E: Established**

By and through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ God has made His intentions known. The preaching of the gospel developed from those initial days in Jerusalem that I referred to earlier in my talk. When Paul reached Athens, he was shocked by their idolatry and that the living God was entirely unknown to them. Therefore, he presented the Creator God when he preached to them in the Areopagus. He said that, by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, God has established the right to judge wayward mankind. *“The times of [man’s] ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead”* (Acts 17:30-31). The Athenians got the point. If Christ had been resurrected, they too would be raised and that to be judged. Sadly, some mocked at the idea, but others did believe and were saved.

**5. N: New**

In the resurrection of Christ, believers have been *“made alive together with him”* (Colossians 2:13), that is, they have new life in Him. As such new creations, we’re required to live *“in newness of life”* and to serve God *“in the new life of the Spirit”* (Romans 6:4 and Romans 7:6). The very power that God used to raise Christ out from among the dead is made available to us to walk in the good works, which God prepared beforehand for us (see Ephesians 1:19-20 and Ephesians 2:10). You see, God started His work of new creation when Jesus was raised from the dead. *“[Christ] is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent”* (Colossians 1:18). *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come”* (2 Corinthians 5:17). What a glorious thought to finish on this Easter day!

Thank you for listening to this *Truth for Today* talk, number T1090, entitled “He is risen”, in our 2019 Easter Messages series.

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