

“Jesus Rose from the Grave”

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Brian Watson

Matthew 28:1–10

¹ *After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.*

² *There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.*

⁵ *The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”*

⁸ *So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”¹*

I don’t usually tell many stories, but I want to begin with one. It may seem silly, but bear with me for a moment. My wife, Kathy, and I used to have two dogs, Jasmine and Tucker. We adopted them from the same animal shelter in North Carolina. First we adopted Jasmine, and then five months later we adopted Tucker. We had them together for seven years, and during that time they were an inseparable duo. They played well together, they curled up next to each other to sleep, and they were the best of friends.

After we had Jasmine for a little over five years, she started to have seizures. We did our best to help reduce the number of seizures by putting her on medication, but after a couple of years, her seizures became worse. Finally, one weekend, she had a series of seizures that just didn’t stop. I brought her to the animal hospital in the middle of the night to help her, but it seemed our only options were to hospitalize her and put her on a more expensive medication, or to put her to sleep. For a number of reasons, we made the difficult decision to euthanize her. So I brought her back to the animal hospital and I was in the room when the veterinarian administered the lethal drugs. This was almost two years ago.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, the Scripture contained herein is taken from the New International Version (1984).

Though Jasmine was just a dog, her death was very difficult for me to handle. I wondered if we had made the right decision, but something else bothered me. Her death reminded me that we are all mortal. We will all die. And it reminded that we all face loss. I wept a number of times in the days that followed.

Something else happened within the following days. Every night I used to let the dogs go outside one final time to do their business. I would open up the door to the backyard, and the dogs would go out racing into the dark night, beyond the reach of the floodlight that only illuminated the patio. Now, I just had Tucker to let out. I remember one of those nights after Jasmine died, I let Tucker out to do his business. And a thought occurred to me: what if out of the dark, she came running back into the house? It was a fleeting thought, but it expressed something very powerful: hope for life after death.

Now, I know this is just a dog. But I wonder if you've experienced the loss of a person, a relative or a friend, and hoped that you might see them one more time. Perhaps, in the wake of a death, the phone rang, and you hoped you would hear their voice on the other end of the line. Perhaps you were out shopping and saw someone who looked sort of like that person, and you hoped that you could see your loved one again.

I think we all have some hope for life after death because we know that death is wrong. According to Christianity, death is an alien intruder into God's world. When God made everything, he made it good. Yet the first humans did not obey God. They did not listen to God and they didn't trust that his rules were good. Because of the way they acted, there is a fracture in the relationship between God and people. Because of that broken relationship, life is difficult and death came into the world. Of course, we all sense that death is wrong. It is an enemy to be defeated, something that shouldn't exist.

Christianity tells us that there is a life beyond this one. Almost two thousand years ago, a man died and two days later he rose from the dead, in a perfect body that cannot die again. That's what we celebrate on Easter. We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And this resurrection changes everything. It gives us hope and it should change the way we live.

This morning I want to tell the story of the resurrection of Jesus. Then I want to give us some reasons why we can believe the resurrection actually happened. And then I want to show us why it matters.

In the Bible, there are four Gospels. Gospel means “good news,” and each of the four Gospels in the Bible is a sort of theological biography of Jesus. The four Gospel writers—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—each construct their biographies in different ways, but each of them shows that Jesus died, that he was buried, and that he was later seen by his disciples. We just heard part of Matthew’s account of the resurrection. To help us understand what Matthew says, I’ll back up and give us some context.

Jesus died on a Friday, probably in the year A.D. 33. (The year 30 is the other possible year.) He died for a number of reasons: he died because the Jewish religious leaders were jealous of him and because they thought he was wrong when he claimed to be God. Jesus died because he was betrayed by a follower of his, Judas. And he died because it was part of God’s plan. Because all of us have rebelled against God and broken his commands, we deserve to pay. God is a perfect judge who must make sure that all evil is punished. But God is also merciful and gracious, so he provided a way for us to be made right with him. For those who put their trust in Jesus and have a relationship with him that is marked by love and obedience, their sins were punished at the cross. To hear more about that, you can listen to the sermon I gave on Friday, which is available on our website, wbcommunity.org.²

Matthew tells us that when Jesus was buried, a number of women were there. This is what it says in Matthew 27:55-56:

⁵⁵ Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. ⁵⁶ Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.

Jesus had healed Mary Magdalene,³ and she became his follower. There was also another Mary, not Jesus’ mother, but the mother of two other men, James and Joses. The mother of James and John, two of Jesus’ disciples, was also there. This is an important detail because two of these women see where Jesus was buried, and they also see the empty tomb.

In the next few verses, Matthew tells us where Jesus was buried. We read this in Matthew 27:57–61:

² The sermon, “Jesus Died,” was given on April 3, 2015, and can be found more specifically at <http://wbcommunity.org/jesus>.

³ He had driven seven demons out of her; see Luke 8:2.

⁵⁷ As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. ⁵⁹ Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. ⁶¹ Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

Normally, someone who was crucified would be buried in shallow grave. But a rich man named Joseph, who was both a follower of Jesus and a member of the Sanhedrin (Luke 23:50-51), asked for Jesus' body and placed him in his own tomb. This fulfilled a verse in the Old Testament written over seven hundred years earlier. Isaiah 53:9 says,

⁹ He was assigned a grave with the wicked,
and with the rich in his death,
though he had done no violence,
nor was any deceit in his mouth.

In the next few verses, we see something interesting: some of the Jewish religious leaders who didn't believe in Jesus decided that Jesus' tomb needed to be guarded. We find this in the next few verses in Matthew. This is Matthew 27:62-66:

⁶² The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. ⁶³ "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' ⁶⁴ So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

⁶⁵ "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

Before Jesus died, he predicted several times that he would rise from the grave. It occurred to these leaders, the chief priests and the Pharisees, that the disciples might steal the body. They thought Jesus was wrong. They assumed he couldn't be raised from the dead. But they also thought his disciples were deceptive. They wanted to guard against anyone stealing Jesus' body and then saying later that he had risen.⁴ It seems that the tomb was guarded by Roman soldiers. It would have been sealed with some clay that was bore the stamp of the Roman Emperor.

⁴ Justin Martyr (100-165), writing in the middle of the second century, states that this was the Jewish claim regarding the origin of Christianity.

In the passage that was read earlier, Mathew 28:1-10, we see that the two Marys went to the tomb. In Mark (16:1) and Luke (23:56; 24:1); we're told they went to the tomb to put spices on Jesus' body. (It was a custom to put a mixture of aromatic spices on a corpse to lessen the smell that would naturally come with decomposition.) When the women arrive at the tomb, they see an angel, whose appearance is accompanied by an earthquake. The shock of the angel's appearance causes the guards to pass out. Then the angel tells the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay" (Matt. 28:5-6). He also told them to go tell the disciples the news that Jesus had risen. When the women depart, they run into Jesus and they worship him (v. 9). This verse shows that Jesus is God, because only God should be worshiped, and Jesus doesn't correct the women.

Matthew continues the story in the next few verses. This is Matthew 28:11-15:

¹¹ While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹² When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, ¹³ telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.'" ¹⁴ If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." ¹⁵ So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

That's what we find in Matthew's Gospel, and that's what we find, more or less, in the other Gospels.

If we are going to understand the resurrection, we need to know what it is. The first thing to know is that when Jesus rose from the dead, he rose in a body that can never die again. Paul shows us this in 1 Corinthians 15, which is a very important passage for understanding the resurrection. In verse 42 he writes, "So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable." There are a few other times in the story of the Bible when people come back to life.⁵ But the difference between those miracles and Jesus' resurrection is that those people would die again. Jesus' body will not and cannot die again.

The second thing to know is that Jesus' resurrection is the first resurrection of many. In 1 Corinthians 15:20, Paul says that Jesus is the "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep," which

⁵ Outside of Jesus' resurrection, we have mention of eight individuals coming back to life: see 1 Kgs. 17:17-24; 2 Kgs. 4:20-37; 13:21; Luke 7:11-16; Mark 5:35-43; John 11:1-44; Acts 9:36-41; 20:7-12.

is a nice way of saying those who have died. When Jesus comes back to earth, everyone who has ever lived will be resurrected. Some will live in a new creation, a new earth, that is perfect. It will be only God and his people. Others will be separated from God and anything good. We call that hell. The good news is that God is committed to his creation. One day, he is going to remake it into something amazing. There will be nothing bad. In Revelation 21:4, it says, “There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” So Jesus’ resurrection is like the first installment or the down payment of what is going to come. The whole universe will be renewed and God’s people will be raised in bodies that can never die, and they will live with him forever.

I’ll come back to the significance of the resurrection. Right now, I want to give us reasons why we can believe that the resurrection happened. After all, it’s a hard thing to believe that a dead man came back to life. Even though we hope for such a thing, we have never seen a dead person alive again.

First, let me address a basic objection. Some people don’t believe in the resurrection because they think that miracles are impossible. They don’t believe in anything beyond what they can see and observe and measure. They don’t believe in anything supernatural.

Miracles may be hard to believe in, but if we believe in the existence of God, they are not. By definition, God can do anything he desires to do. If he can create the universe out of nothing, what is it for him to bring someone back from the dead? The best mainstream science suggests that the universe emerged out of nothing: no matter, no energy, no space—absolutely nothing. I’ve mentioned this before, but this argument for God’s existence is called the cosmological argument. In one sense, the creation of the universe is the grandest miracle of them all.⁶ It certainly sets the stage for any subsequent miracles.

The existence of God accounts for all the design that we see in the universe. This includes everything from the orderly movements of the planets to the laws of physics to the amazing details we find our cells. A great example is DNA, which is a type of code, or language. DNA is information, and chance does not produce information. An agent, an intelligence, is needed to produce information, and that intelligent agent is God.

God’s existence also accounts for objective moral facts. We know certain things are right and certain things are wrong. Why are certain things right and certain things wrong? Because we

⁶ To read more about the cosmological argument, see <http://wbcommunity.org/cosmological-argument>.

said so? Because we like it that way? Honestly, I don't think anything accounts for our understanding of morality other than that God is the basis for morality. Also, we all believe humans should have certain rights. Why should humans have rights? I think human rights only make sense if we acknowledge we are created by God, and that each human being is therefore valuable.

There are many other arguments for God, but my point is that the existence of God is a rational idea, and if the best scientific evidence points to the fact that God made the universe out of nothing, then miracles are possible.

The Scottish philosopher, David Hume (1711-1776), made one of the more influential arguments against miracles. He said, "A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined."⁷ His point was that all that we see seems to run according to the so-called laws of nature. We never see anything against the laws of nature. Therefore, our experience tells us that miracles are impossible. The problem with that is that, first of all, there have been reports of miracles. Miracles are rare, but people from all different places and times have claimed to see miraculous things.⁸

There's another problem. What he calls the "laws of nature" are simply the way that God normally does things in the universe. The Bible makes it clear that God sustains all of creation at all times. Every atomic bond, every moment when a gravitational force is exerted, all of this is sustained by God.⁹ So, in God's normal way of doing things, people die and stay dead. But every once in an extremely rare while, God raises someone from the dead to show his power.

A lot of Hume's argument turns on probability. To paraphrase him, he says that it's more likely that someone who claims to have seen a miracle is either lying or is deceived, than it is likely that the miracle actually occurred. In other words, to believe in a miracle it would have to

⁷ David Hume, Chapter 10, "Of Miracles," in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding and Selections from a Treatise of Human Nature* (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1921), 120.

⁸ Hume writes, "It is no miracle that a man, seemingly in good health, should die on a sudden: because such a kind of death, though more unusual than any other, has yet been frequently observed to happen. But it is a miracle, that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed in any age or country" (p. 120). He claims that no one has seen the dead come to life, but that is exactly what happens in the Bible, and at least some of them are eyewitness accounts (perhaps John 11, most likely Acts 20). For various modern-day miracle stories, see Eric Metaxas, *Miracles: What They Are, Why They Happen, and How They Can Change Your Life* (New York: Dutton, 2014).

⁹ See Heb. 1:3, among many examples of God ordaining and directing all the affairs of the natural world.

be more miraculous for the eyewitness to lie than the miracle to have occurred.¹⁰ To use Hume's phrase, according to the laws of nature, no one ever comes back to life who has been dead for any significant length of time. But if God enters into the picture, things change. I would argue that the probability of God raising the dead when he wants to is 100 percent.

Let me put it another way. Imagine my four year-old son and I are standing in front of a pair of 45-pound dumbbells, which we actually do have in our house. What is the probability that my son could take one of those dumbbells and do a biceps curl? You would probably say zero, and I think you would be right. But what if his father grabbed both ends of the dumbbell, while he went to curl the weight? What is the probability now? I can tell you it's 100 percent. That's how miracles work. Without God, they're impossible. With God, they are very much possible.

So, philosophically and theologically speaking, the case for miracles is strong.

But what about the evidence of the resurrection?

I don't have time to go through a lot of details, but I will mention a few. If you want to learn more, I have posted an article on the church's website, wbcommunity.org.¹¹

First, the New Testament documents are historically reliable. They were written by eyewitnesses or by those who had access to eyewitnesses, and they were written within a few decades of the events they describe. That may not sound impressive, but it is compared to other ancient histories. And they were written far too early to be legends.

Second, there is simply no evidence that the content of the New Testament has been tampered with. We have no evidence of anyone adding legendary accounts to earlier writings. But we do have evidence that the earliest teachings in Christianity emphasized the resurrection. Consider what Paul, a missionary sent by the risen Jesus, wrote to the church in a city called Corinth. We find this passage in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8:

¹⁰ The passage (on *ibid.*, 121-122), is, "The plain consequence is (and it is a general maxim worthy of our attention), 'That no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, than the fact, which it endeavours to establish; and even in that case there is a mutual destruction of arguments, and the superior only gives us an assurance suitable to that degree of force, which remains, after deducting the inferior.' When anyone tells me, that he saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider with myself, whether it be more probable, that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact, which he relates, should really have happened. I weigh the one miracle against the other; and according to the superiority, which I discover, I pronounce my decision, and always reject the greater miracle. If the falsehood of his testimony would be more miraculous, than the event which he relates; then, and not till then, can he pretend to command my belief or opinion."

¹¹ The long version is available here: <http://wbcommunity.org/cosmological-argument>. Here is a shorter version: <http://wbcommunity.org/evidence-resurrection-jesus-christ>.

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

In this passage, he uses technical terms: he received this teaching from someone else, and he passed it on to the Corinthians. This passage appears to be like a creed, because it has a structure that makes it easy to memorize. Even in the English translation, we can see that in the first half “that” appear four times: “that Christ died,” “that he was buried,” “that he was raised,” and “that he appeared to Peter.” In the original Greek, the second half has four “then” clauses: then “he appeared to more than five hundred” people, then “he appeared to James,” “then to all the apostles,” and then to Paul. Paul probably received this statement of belief from the apostles Peter and James.

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians around the year 54, give or take a year. Since Paul converted from Judaism to Christianity within a couple of years of Jesus’ death,¹² and since he visited some of Jesus’ disciples, Peter and James, in Jerusalem three years later (Gal. 1:18), it would seem likely that Paul received this teaching within about five years after Jesus died and rose from the grave. This is the original Christian teaching, not a later legend.

We should also notice that there are details in the Gospel accounts of the resurrection that no one would ever make up. In the Gospels, the first eyewitnesses to the resurrection are women. In the first century in Palestine, a woman’s testimony was almost useless. In that male-dominated society, a woman’s testimony would be heard in court only in rare cases.¹³ If you were making up a story, you wouldn’t have women as the first witnesses. You would likely have rich men see the empty tomb first.

Not only that, but Jesus’ male followers, the disciples are often presented in the Gospels as thick-headed. And they were cowards. When Jesus was arrested, they ran. Even when the risen Jesus appeared, some of them had doubts. We see that in Matthew 28:17, which says,

¹² According to John B. Polhill, *Paul and His Letters* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 1999), 80, Paul saw the risen Christ in A.D. 32, if Jesus died in the year 30. If A.D. 33 is the correct year, then Paul’s conversion would have been around the year 34.

¹³ Flavius Josephus the Jewish historian, writes in his *Antiquities* 4.8.15, “But let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex.”

“When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.” If you were making up a story, you wouldn’t include that.

There’s also a fair amount of evidence outside the Bible that Jesus rose from the grave. As you would expect, some early Christian theologians write quite clearly about the resurrection. But there are other, non-Christian witnesses, too. For example, Flavius Josephus (c. A.D. 37-c. 100), a Jewish man who became a Roman historian, reported that Jesus was crucified by Pontius Pilate and that he appeared to his disciples three days afterward.¹⁴

The Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus (A.D. 56-117) also wrote of Christians and Christ. After a fire broke out in Rome in A.D. 64, people were looking for someone to blame, and even the emperor, Nero, came under suspicion. Tacitus wrote about how Nero blamed Christians for the fire:

Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular.¹⁵

Tacitus traces the origins of Christianity to “Christus,” an obvious reference to Jesus Christ, who lived during the time of the Roman emperor, Tiberius, and who suffered death (“the extreme penalty”) under Pontius Pilate. Notice also that Christianity was “checked for the moment” after Jesus’ death, only to break out again. This detail harmonizes with what we know from the Bible: after Jesus’ death, the disciples were hiding. Even after his resurrection, the disciples did not do any public teaching. The disciples didn’t make much noise in Judea or beyond until after Jesus ascended to heaven and after they received the promised Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, some seven weeks after the resurrection.

Even if we took just the evidence from outside of the Bible, we would know that an extraordinary man named Jesus lived, that he was crucified by Pontius Pilate, and that he appeared to his disciples later. What else could account for these facts but Jesus’ resurrection?

¹⁴ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.63-64.

¹⁵ Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals* 15.44, eds. Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0078%3Abook%3D15%3Achapter%3D44> (accessed April 5, 2015).

Some people think Jesus didn't actually die on the cross. That's what the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam says.¹⁶ But that's impossible. Crucifixion was a brutal way to die and the Romans certainly knew how to kill people. Others claim that the disciples hallucinated. But hallucinations are personal experiences. They can't be shared.¹⁷ Yet Jesus appeared to many people at different times and in different places. It was no hallucination.

Some people claim that Jesus only appeared in a spiritual, visionary form, not in a real body. Yet his followers touched him (Matt. 28:9; Luke 24:39-40), he ate with them (Luke 24:41-43), and he even prepared food for them (John 21:9-13).

We should also say that there is simply no evidence of a body and no evidence of the disciples stealing the body. How could they? They had no power or money, and they wouldn't be able to get past Roman soldiers. Even if they had stolen the body, someone would have found out. We also have no writings within the first century that claim that the resurrection was a lie. The disciples preached publicly about Jesus' resurrection and the New Testament documents circulated publicly. Anyone could have said, "Those men are lying!" But apart from the Jewish story that the disciples stole the body, we don't have that.

So, what does the resurrection mean? I already said that Jesus was the first installment of the new creation. If you are in Christ Jesus, you are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Your spirit is being renewed now, and you will receive a new body later.

Jesus' resurrection insures our regeneration. This is what Peter writes in his first letter. 1 Peter 1:3-5: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you,⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time." Do you get that? God has caused us to be born again *through* the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The same power that rose Jesus Christ from the grave raises our (spiritually) dead hearts to new life in him.

Jesus' resurrection also insures our justification. Look at Romans 4:25. Here, Paul writes about Abraham, the great Old Testament example of someone who had faith. Paul shows that

¹⁶ Surah 4:157.

¹⁷ Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 484: "Since hallucinations are mental events with no external referent, one cannot share in the hallucinations of another."

Abraham was counted righteous by his faith, by his trust in God's promises. All who believe in the risen Jesus will be counted righteous. Then Paul writes, "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." We are declared just, in the right, not guilty, because Jesus was raised from the dead. This is what theologian Wayne Grudem says about the resurrection: "By raising Christ from the dead, God the Father was in effect saying that he approved of Christ's work of suffering and dying for our sins, that his work was completed, and that Christ no longer had any need to remain dead. There was no penalty left to pay for sin, no more wrath of God to bear, no more guilt of liability to punishment—all had been completely paid for, and no guilt remained."¹⁸

Tim Keller writes something similar in his book, *King's Cross*, "Jesus had risen, just as he told them he would. After a criminal does his time in jail and satisfies the sentence, the law has no more claim on him and he walks out free. Jesus Christ came to pay the penalty for our sins. That was an infinite sentence, but he must have satisfied it fully, because on Easter Sunday he walked out free. The resurrection was God's way of stamping PAID IN FULL right across history so that nobody could miss it."¹⁹

Here's another thing that the resurrection shows us: Jesus' resurrection insures that we will one day have resurrected bodies. We will not be disembodied spirits floating on clouds. We don't become angels, as I've heard some people say. We will receive perfect bodies. We won't have diseases, or bad backs or bad knees or bad hips. There will be no sin, only God, his people, and a perfect universe.

This last point should give us great hope. We know how this story ends. We don't know when it will end, but we know it has a happy ending. All the lies of this world, all the false gods, the idols, the things that we think will make us happy—they can't compare to the glory of the new creation.

If you believe that, it changes the way you live. In 1 Corinthians 15, as Paul is writing of the resurrection, he says this, in verse 32: "If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'" People who don't believe in God, who don't believe in the resurrection, they say, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." Young people have a phrase: YOLO, or, "you only live once." Some people think that's true, and they try to grab as much as they can in this

¹⁸ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 615.

¹⁹ Timothy Keller, *King's Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus* (New York: Dutton, 2011), 219.

life, whether it's money or experiences. But that's not what Christians should do. If we believe the resurrection, we are free to risk it all. In verse 31, Paul writes, "I die every day!" He spent his life for Christ, knowing that there would be a greater reward in the future. Paul viewed his life as a race to be run for Christ. He viewed his life as a drink offering, to be poured out to the glory of God. He didn't sit around making a nice, comfortable life for himself.

Christians, we are free to make sacrifices, because one day we'll have far greater pleasure than we can ever have right now. That reminds of the famous quote by Jim Elliott, a young man who one day wrote in his journal: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Let me read that again: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." A few years later, in 1956, Elliott gave his life for Christ. While on a mission to Ecuador, he was killed by some indigenous people there. He was only 28. He was no fool. He knew what the resurrection meant, and he lived accordingly.

Christians, we will have eternity to enjoy, but now we have work to do. Think about this: there are at least two things we won't do in eternity. One, we won't sin, which is good. But, two, we won't evangelize in eternity. We won't need to share the gospel, because everyone there will believe in God. But we do have this time, right now, to share the gospel. We won't have another chance to do that.

If you're here today and you're not a Christian, let me say I'm glad you're here. I really am. And I hope you've been listening. Christianity makes a grand claim: a man, who was also God, died and then rose from the grave, never to die again. Consider the evidence. Read the Gospels. Go online and read the evidence in greater detail at the church's website. Talk to me about it. But please, for your sake, don't just shrug your shoulders. None of us should do that. There's too much at stake. Eternity is at stake.

Though Jesus suffered, he rose from the grave. Whatever we face in this life, we will rise. Will you put your faith in Jesus and live with him forever in paradise, or you will continue to live life on your terms? Choose this day.