

RESURRECTION

- A. Introduction: Hi everyone! Once again, we are livestreaming from our home because we're still under stay at home orders as our country works to slow the spread of the corona virus. We're using these talks to address what is happening and why. Our purpose is to quell people's fears as we strengthen our trust in Almighty God by explaining what is happening and why.
1. We've already covered a lot of information in previous weeks. If you missed some of our talks, they are archived on our facebook page and you can listen to them.
 - a. We've made the point that the second coming of Jesus is near. Before Jesus left this earth two thousand years ago, He indicated that the years leading up to His return will be marked by increasingly challenging times.
 1. Matt 24:6-8—Jesus listed certain signs that will indicate His return is near. He compared them to birth pangs, meaning they will increase in frequency and intensity as His return gets closer.
 2. This pandemic is a birth pang. It's not the end of the world or the end of our country. This labor pain will end. But there will be other birth pangs.
 - b. According to Jesus, people will be terrified by what they see coming on the earth prior to His return. Jesus said that men's hearts will fail them for fear. Luke 21:26
 1. But Jesus' words to His followers are: Don't be troubled or terrified (Matt 24:6, Luke 21:9). In fact, Jesus told His followers: When you see these things begin to happen, be elated in joyous expectation because the plan of redemption is about to be completed (Luke 21:28).
 - A. God's plan for a family is the reason for creation. He created men and women to become His sons and daughters through faith in Christ. He made this world to be the family home.
 - B. However, both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. Redemption is God's plan to undo the damage done and carry out His original plan through Jesus.
 2. Jesus came to earth two thousand years ago to pay for sin and open the way for us to join God's family through faith in Him. He's coming back to complete the plan by cleansing this world of every trace of corruption, and death, restoring it to pre-sin conditions. Isa 65:17
 2. We have more to say about the coming transformation of this world and related issues in the weeks to come. But tonight, we're going to address one of the most important things we can do to prepare for the days and years ahead. We must learn to deal with fear.
- B. In previous talks we've made the point that God's message to His people is always: Fear not, for I am with you. And, no matter what you encounter, it will not destroy you because it's not bigger than me. Isa 43:1-2
1. According to *Webster's Dictionary* fear is unpleasant, often strong emotion caused by awareness or expectation of danger.
 - a. Awareness of danger: When you encounter something harmful or dangerous you feel fear. That fight or flight mechanism kicks in, and you deal with whatever you are facing one way or the other.
 - b. But fear moves to a whole new level when it's aroused by an expectation of danger or fear of the future. The event is not yet here, but you're anticipating it and you are worried and anxious.
 1. Fear then becomes a tormenting emotion. For the next however many days until the event does or doesn't occur, you're tormented by what may or may not happen—the "what ifs".
 2. Every day leading up to the anticipated danger is affected by something that hasn't happened yet. In many cases, the anxiety or fear over a possible future event is worse than the event itself, because your imagination goes to work overtime.
 3. None of this is productive. It's actually harmful. You expend emotional energy over something not yet here, something you can't do anything about until it gets here—if it ever does. As a result, fear of a possible future event robs you of peace in the present moment.

2. Because of the global pandemic and related economic issues caused by the shutdown of our economy and others around the world, a lot of people are dealing with fear of the future—the “what ifs”. Jesus addressed this kind of fear when He was here two thousand years ago. Consider what Jesus said.
 - a. Jesus was teaching about the fact that we have a heavenly Father who loves us, knows what we need, and will take care of us. In that context Jesus said: Don’t worry about where the necessities of life will come from—food, clothing. That’s fear of the future.
 1. Matt 6:25-26—Put away anxious thoughts about food and drink to keep you alive (NEB)... Look at the birds in the sky. They never sow nor reap nor store away in barns, and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you more valuable to him than they are (J.B. Phillips)?
 2. Matt 6:31-33—So don’t worry and don’t keep saying what shall we drink or what shall we wear ...your Heavenly Father knows that you need them all. Set your heart first on his kingdom and his goodness, and these things will come to you as a matter of course (J.B. Phillips).
 - b. We could spend the rest of tonight’s discussion examining what Jesus said. But notice two points He made that—if put into practice—will mitigate the fear of the future and the anxiety many are feeling. Jesus said: Put away anxious thoughts and don’t keep saying.
 1. You must make an effort to control your mind. Become aware of what you are focusing on and then talking to yourself about. We tend to focus on what we see and how we feel and talk to ourselves about it—and it gets bigger and we get more upset and anxious.
 2. Instead, focus on what God says about His care for you and His promise to provide. You’d be a lot better off feeding on, filling your mind with and talking to yourself about what Jesus said about God’s care for us rather than all the ever changing, dire details on the news.
 3. Now, it may seem like I’m going off topic and moving to an unrelated subject—but I’m not. We’re going to spend the rest of our time tonight talking about why you can trust Jesus’ words about God’s care and provision for you. We’re going to talk about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - a. If we’re honest about it, at the root of most if not all fear is the fear of death: This pandemic and resulting economic shutdown may kill me or someone I love.
 - b. Death is an irreversible condition common to all mankind. Everyone dies. It’s only a matter of when and how. Every human being has to come to terms with death because no one escapes it.
 - c. However, we do not need to fear death because it cannot destroy us. Death, our greatest enemy, has already been defeated. Through His resurrection Jesus Christ conquered death, hell, and the grave.
- C. Christianity stands apart from every other religion in that it is not based on the founder’s dreams and visions or on His ideology and belief system. It is founded on a historical fact—the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
1. When the resurrection of Jesus is examined with the same criteria used to assess other historical events we find that there is more evidence for the resurrection of Jesus than for many events recorded in textbooks used in our schools and universities.
 - a. There are numerous accounts of skeptics and unbelievers through the centuries who set out to disprove Jesus’ resurrection but came away as believers when they realized that the evidence overwhelmingly confirms the fact that He did indeed rise from the dead.
 - b. Two good examples are Josh McDowell, who wrote *The Resurrection Factor*, and Lee Strobel, who wrote *The Case for Christ*.
 2. This goes back to what we said in our previous talks. To walk without fear in the challenging days that are coming upon the earth, you must see the big picture. There’s more to life than just this life and there are more people involved and interested in what is happening right now than just us.
 - a. No one who has died since the beginning of time has ceased to exist. All are somewhere right now. Where they are depends on how they responded to the light of Jesus given to their generation.

1. All human beings have an inward and an outward portion to their makeup—spirit (and soul) and body. When the body stops working the inward and outward parts separate. The man or woman on the inside passes into another dimension and the body returns to dust.
2. Those who know the Lord pass into God’s home (Heaven), and those who don’t pass into a place of separation from Him (Hell).
- b. Death was never part of God’s plan for man. Neither is separation from the body part of God’s plan for us. Death and separation from the body occurs because of Adam’s sin. Rom 5:12
 1. God’s plan of redemption includes not just Heaven when our body dies, but the reuniting of the inward and outward man that are separated by death. That’s what resurrection of the dead is—reuniting us with our bodies so we can live on earth again after it is made new.
 2. This time it will be forever because our bodies will be made incorruptible (no longer subject to sickness, injury, infirmity, or old age) and immortal (no longer subject to death). I Cor 15:52-54
- c. Almighty God showed us His power over death in and through Jesus. Jesus triumphed over death by coming out of it—the same body that died on the Cross and was placed in the tomb came out of it. Jesus did this in part to deliver us from the fear of death. Heb 2:14-15
 1. I Cor 15:20-23—Jesus’ resurrection is proof that all who put faith in Him will be raised from the dead as well. In that culture firstfruits referred to the first portion of various crops that were offered to the Lord as a promise that the rest will come in.
 2. Resurrection of the dead (reuniting all believers with their bodies) will complete the plan of God in a glorious demonstration of life conquering death.
 3. I Cor 15:24-26—Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death (ESV).
3. As wonderful as Heaven is, it’s temporary. And everyone in the present invisible Heaven is looking forward to being reunited with their bodies and returning to this earth to live forever once it is made new. Consider a real life example. (Remember, the Bible is 50% history.)
 - a. A man named Job lived on this earth about 4,000 years ago. Like all of us, he experienced the hardships of life in a fallen world. He lost his health, his wealth, and his family.
 1. There is much misunderstanding of the Book of Job. Job is not the story of a man chosen by God to suffer affliction. Nor is it an explanation of why people suffer beyond the fact that pain and loss are part of life in a sin-damaged, fallen world.
 2. Job is a mini-story of redemption. God delivered a man from his troubles and restored to him what he lost. Some of the restoration came in this life and some in the life to come. The account of his experiences was written to give us hope.
 - b. God healed Job of a physical ailment, but he eventually died as do we all. Yet Job knew there is more to life than just this life. Listen to his words: for I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God (Job 19:25-26, ESV).
 - c. And God restored to Job twice what he lost (Job 42:10). He recovered his wealth two times over—7,000 sheep became 14,000; 3,000 camels became 6,000; 500 teams of oxen became 1,000; etc.
 1. Job originally had seven sons and three daughters (ten children). All were tragically killed. But he eventually had ten more children. That doesn’t seem to be double—unless you understand that the first ten did not cease to exist when they died.
 2. Job was reunited with them when he died, and the entire family will return to live on this earth again, reunited with their bodies through resurrection when Jesus returns to complete the plan of God.

4. I am in no way minimizing the real pain, suffering, and loss that all humans experience in this fallen world. Nor am I trying to minimize the seriousness of the circumstances facing us—the pandemic and the economic fallout resulting from the economic shutdown.
 - a. But I am saying that when you understand the big picture (the fact that there's more to life than just this life) and know that the greater and better part of life is after this life (the best is yet to come), it lightens the load of life's hardships and gives us hope in the midst of it.
 1. Since the beginning of time millions and millions of people have died. Those who are presently in Heaven—including Job—would tell us that we have no reason to fear death.
 2. Separation from loved ones at death is temporary. Separation from the body is temporary. Separation from this earth is temporary. All material loss is temporary. What is not restored in this life will be in the life to come.
 - b. This perspective helps us deal with the ultimate fear, the fear of death, by silencing the “what ifs”.
 1. What if it doesn't work and I or someone I loves dies? What if I don't get back all I lost? What if I don't achieve what I thought I would before I die?
 2. We need to live with the awareness that we're only passing through this life as it is, and death is not the end. It's the beginning of the next and best chapter of our lives.
 5. Perhaps you are thinking: Can't we just boldly proclaim that the corona virus won't come to our house and that no economic disaster can touch us? Of course we can.
 - a. The problem is that for a lot of us, much of this bravado is nothing more than fear masquerading as faith—if we just say the right words and don't say certain other words we'll be alright. If we just don't admit that we're afraid we'll be okay. That's not faith. That's denial.
 - b. Protection and provision doesn't come through working a formula. Protection and provision come to those who trust their heavenly Father. God works on behalf of those who trust Him. Ps 56:3-4
 1. Jesus' resurrection authenticates everything He said to us. He predicted that He would rise from the dead before it happened, and it happened just as He said. Matt 16:21; Matt 20:19
 2. Jesus also promised that He will be back to complete the plan of redemption (Acts 1:11) and He assured us that our heavenly Father will take care of us until He comes. Jesus proved His word to us by rising from the dead. If we can trust one things He said, we can trust everything.
- D. Conclusion: As we go through these challenging days, don't feed your fears, feed your faith. Don't focus your attention on what scares you.
1. Focus on what strengthens your trust in God—the Word of Almighty God who knows all, sees all, loves all, and is faithful to keep His Word to all.
 2. There is no reason to fear. Death cannot destroy us; it has been conquered. The resurrection of Jesus is proof of that.