

Sermon Notes for April 4, 2010

Easter Sunday
“Why Would Anyone Believe
In The Resurrection of Jesus Christ?”
1 Corinthians 15:3-19

Why is **lemon juice** made with artificial flavor, and **dishwashing liquid** made with **real lemons**? Why is the man who **invests all your money** called a **broker**? Why is the **time of day with the slowest traffic** called **rush hour**? Why isn't there **mouse-flavored cat food**? Why don't you ever see the headline, “**Psychic Wins Lottery**”? Why are there **Braille labels** at **drive-up ATMs**? Why are they called **apartments** when they are all **stuck together**? Why can't women put on **mascara with their mouths closed**? And **why is the resurrection of Jesus Christ such a big deal**?

Introduction

A. WHY WOULD ANYONE BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST CAME BACK FROM THE DEAD?

1. Why would any rational, well-educated person believe that a man could come back from the dead?
2. We are talking about **REANIMATION HERE!**
 - a. Jesus was killed
 - b. He was buried
 - c. He was in the grave for 3 days
 - d. and THEN HE CAME BACK FROM THE DEAD!

B. There Are OBVIOUS IMPLICATIONS IF JESUS DID OR DID NOT COME BACK FROM THE DEAD.

1. It is not “all right” if Jesus did not come back from the dead
 - a. It is not “enough” to think that Jesus came to this earth to be a “good example”
 - b. It is not “enough” to think that Jesus “meant well”, but did not come back from the dead.
2. **James Cameron**, the director of such movies as “Titanic” and “Avatar”:
 - a. created a TV special called “The Lost Tomb of Jesus.” In this special, Cameron makes the claim that Jesus’ bones were found in a tomb near Jerusalem.
 - b. Well, if this were true, it would call an end of the movement called Christianity.
 1. If you have no resurrection of Jesus Christ, you have no Christianity.
 2. As **Dr. Ben Pierce** said of Cameron’s discovery: “**Well, if this is true, I will be headed to a Temple instead of a church this weekend.**”
3. Let us look today at the implications of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I. The IMPLICATIONS OF JESUS CHRIST NOT BEING RAISED FROM THE DEAD

A. OUR PREACHING IS A WASTE OF TIME

Vs. 12 – 14a – “But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And **if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless**”

1. If Jesus Christ did not come back from the dead, the Apostle Paul said that our preaching is in vain
 - a. if Jesus Christ did not come back from the dead, every preacher of the Christian faith is simply making noise, saying nothing, wasting his time
 - b. for, if Jesus Christ did not come back from the dead, **PREACHERS DO NOT** have a **MESSAGE!**
 - c. **FOR WHAT OTHER MESSAGE IS THERE FOR THE CHRISTIAN?**
 1. Christianity is not simply about being a good person
 2. Christianity is not only about following the rules
 3. **NO, CHRISTIANITY IS THE MESSAGE ABOUT A SAVIOR WHO CAME TO THIS EARTH TO DIE FOR THE SINS OF MAN AND COME BACK FROM THE DEAD!**
I Corinthians 15:1-4 – “Now, brothers, I want to remind you of **the gospel** I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.” **By this gospel you are saved**, if you hold firmly to the Word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that **Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,**
 4. If Jesus Christ did not die for the sins of man and then resurrect to take His finished work to God the Father, **WE HAVE NO MESSAGE TO PREACH!**
2. Therefore, all of the Preachers . . .
 - a. and all of the seminaries
 - b. and all of the preparation
 - c. and all of the commentaries
 - d. and all of the effort to communicate the message **HAS BEEN A COLOSSAL WASTE OF TIME!**
 - e. and this has been a waste of time for some 2000 years!

B. OUR FAITH IS USELESS

Vs. 14 – “And **if Christ has not been raised**, our preaching is useless **and so is your faith.**”

1. While it is important to believe that Jesus Christ died and came back from the dead,
 - a. **FAITH** is the “method” by which a person “receives” the work that Jesus did on the cross for our sins
 - b. so. . . if Jesus Christ did not come back from the dead, **THEN WE HAVE FAITH IN NOTHING!**
 - c. for, what would people have faith in?

1. If Jesus Christ did not come back from the dead, He would have just been another, “well-meaning person who wanted to help people.”
 2. but, just like all of those other “well-meaning people”, they too died and are still in the grave!
2. That **“KIND OF FAITH” GETS YOU NOTHING**
- a. what is your “faith” in?
 - b. is your faith in Jesus to be:
 1. a good model?
 2. a good example?
 3. a good teacher?
 - c. no, the “kind of faith” that we all need is the faith that **SAVES US FROM OUR SINS!**
 1. how can a “mere man” save us from our sins?
 2. no matter how kind, or how thoughtful or how wise Jesus was, if He did not come back from the dead; He simply lived, and died and that was it!
 3. that is what Buddhism is all about:
 - a. Buddhism is based on the life and teaching of **Siddhartha Gautama,**
 - b. he lived in Northern India around the 4th century B.C.
 - c. Buddha, as he was called, was seen as a wise and “awakened” teacher
 - d. however, Buddha died at the age of 80 and was buried **AND HE IS STILL DEAD!**
 - e. what difference is there between a “well-meaning” Jesus who did not come back from the dead , and a “well-meaning” Buddha, except in what they taught?
 - f. **BOTH OF THESE “WELL-MEANING” TEACHERS WOULD STILL BE IN THE GRAVE!**
3. That “kind of faith” is actually hopeless
- a. when you are in a hospital room and hear your doctor say that you have inoperable cancer; and someone in the room responds, “I have faith that you do not have cancer”
 - b. if you had been on the Titanic and someone said that the ship had hit an iceberg and you say “I have faith that we did not hit an iceberg.”
 - c. “True faith” is actually based on “reality”
 1. we have “faith” that there are atoms
 2. we have “faith” that when we take medicine, we will get well
 3. we have “faith” that Jesus **DID** actually die and come back from the dead, **BECAUSE HE DID!**

C. WE ARE SEEN AS LIARS

Vs. 15 – “More than that, **we are then found to be false witnesses about God**, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. **But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised.**”

1. The Apostle Paul says that if Jesus Christ did not come back from the dead, not only are those who believe in Jesus saying nothing and believing in nothing,

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING IS ACTUALLY A LIE!

2. If Jesus Christ did not come back from the dead, and we teach and preach THAT HE DID, THEN WE ARE LIARS!
 - a. please do not be so kind and gracious . . .
 1. if Jesus did not come back from the dead, then every preacher is a liar
 2. every missionary is a liar
 3. every Sunday School teacher is a liar
 - b. if Jesus Christ did not come back from the dead, the Bible is full of lies!
3. In actuality, not only are preachers and missionaries liars, if Jesus Christ did not come back from the dead, JESUS CHRIST IS HIMSELF A LIAR!
 - a. after all, what did Jesus Christ say HIMSELF and His Resurrection?
 1. **Matthew 16:21** – “From that time on Jesus **began to explain to His disciples** that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that He must be killed **and on the third day be raised to life.**”
 2. **Mark 14:27-28** – “You will all fall away,” Jesus told them, “for it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’ **But after I have risen**, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”
 3. **Matthew 27:62-63** – “The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. “Sir,” they said, “**we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.'**”
 - a. make no mistake about it, Jesus Christ clearly taught that He would come back from the dead!
 1. and if He did not come back from the dead
 2. He was a LIAR!

D. WE HAVE NO SALVATION

Vs. 16-18 – “For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; **you are still in your sins**. Then **those Also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.**”

1. For those who are trusting in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to pay for their sins: if JESUS’ RESURRECTION HAPPEN, then all of these people have no hope of salvation and will spend their lives in hell.
2. thus, all of the people throughout all of history will have the same fate:
 - a. all churchgoers, pastors, missionaries: all of the children who went to Vacation Bible School, every single person who was trusting in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to save them will be lost and go to hell.
 - b. all of those people who lived “Christian lives” on this earth will be in the same hell as:
 1. Hitler, who was responsible for some 17 million deaths
 2. Stalin, who was responsible for some 20 million deaths
 3. and Mao Tse Tung, who was responsible for some 40 million deaths

E. WE ARE TO BE PITIED

Vs. 19 – “If only for this life we have hope in Christ, **we are to be pitied more than all men.**”

1. You would have to agree with Paul:
 - a. if there are those who are depending on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to save them
 1. and Jesus Christ DID NOT come back from the dead.
 2. and is still in the grave
 - b. THEN, “THESE PEOPLE” ARE, OF ALL PEOPLE, TO BE PITIED.
 1. the sense here is “bless their hearts”
 2. “bless their hearts” is a Southern term that allows Southerners to “say anything that they want to”, as long as they say, “bless their hearts”
 - a. “That’s the ugliest baby I have ever seen. . .bless his heart”
 - b. “That person is the stupidest person I have ever met, bless his heart.”
 3. those people think that they are going to heaven because Jesus died for their sins and rose again . . . BUT DID NOT . . . “bless their hearts”
 - c. have you ever watched a little child “demonstrate” how fast they can run and how high they can jump?
 1. you watch then show you
 2. and then you say, “bless their heart.”
2. If Jesus Christ DID NOT come back from the dead, those people who are basing their lives on that resurrection SHOULD BE PITIED!
 - a. what a waste of time their lives have been
 - b. they could have spent their lives so differently
 1. they could have gone to the beach instead of going to church
 2. or sit around on Sundays and watch the news and drink coffee
 3. they could have spent their money elsewhere than the church.

II. The IMPLICATIONS OF JESUS CHRIST BEING RAISED FROM THE DEAD

A. The SCRIPTURES DO TEACH THAT JESUS CHRIST CAME BACK FROM THE DEAD.

Vs. 3-4 – “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that **Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,**”

Genesis 3:15 – “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; **he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.**”

- a. HERE, in **Genesis 3:15**, God is actually prophesying the death of His Son, Jesus Christ, **on the cross.**
 - b. ALREADY, in **Genesis 3:15**, God offered **THE SOLUTION** to man’s sins.
- b. but, God would first “illustrate” what needed to happen to man by instituting the sacrificial system
1. a sinner bringing an animal to the Temple in Jerusalem
 2. the animal would then be tied to the altar and the animal killed
 3. on the Day of Atonement, God would “illustrate” the need for the resurrection in **Leviticus**
 - a. **two goats** would be needed to “make the point”
Leviticus 16:5 – “From the Israelite community he is to take **two male goats** for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.”
 - b. **one goat** will be sacrificed (the cross)
Leviticus 16:15 – ““He shall then **slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people** and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it.”
 1. this first goat will be killed to represent paying for one’s sins
 2. but the goat cannot come back from the dead
 - c. the other goat will be sent into the wilderness (the resurrection)
Leviticus 16:20-22 – ““When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the Tent of Meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. **He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites--all their sins--and put them on the goat's head. He shall send the goat away into the desert** in the care of a man appointed for the task. The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a solitary place; **and the man shall release it in the desert.**”
 1. The Priest will lay his hands upon the goats head symbolically, transferring the sins of the people onto the goat
 2. and the second goat will then be taken to the desert to be sent until it is seen no more
 3. this second goat represents Jesus taking His resurrected body to heaven.

4. after thousands of years of illustrations of the sacrificial system, God sent His Son to be **THAT SACRIFICE**.
 - a. as the “first goat”, to be crucified as the sacrifice
 - b. as the “second goat” to be resurrected as the Savior
- c. but, notice what John the Baptist said about Jesus

John 1:29 – “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, **“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”**

 1. John the Baptist announced that “**THE ONE**” was here, “**THE SACRIFICE**” was here.
 2. John the Baptist announced that Jesus had come to die for the sins of man.
- d. and look what Jesus said **ABOUT HIMSELF**. He knew why He was on this earth.
 1. **Matthew 20: 17-19** – “Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. **They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified.** On the third day he will be raised to life!”
 2. **Matthew 20: 28** – “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, **and to give his life as a ransom for many.**”
- e. that belief led Jesus to die on the cross for the sins of man
 1. He became sin for us - **Matthew 27:45-46** – “From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”--which means, **“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”**
 2. He paid the debt for us - **John 19:30** – “When he had received the drink, Jesus said, **“It is finished.”** With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”
- f. after His death, Jesus was raised from the dead so that He could take His crucified body to present it to His heavenly Father.
 1. Jesus’ resurrected body **HAD** to be presented to appease God the Father
 2. **John 20:17** – “Jesus said, **“Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father.** Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”
 3. **Hebrews 10:12** – “But when this Priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, **He sat down at the right hand of God.”**
 4. **IF JESUS CHRIST DID NOT DIE AND COME BACK FROM THE DEAD, HE COULD NOT HAVE PRESENTED HIMSELF TO HIS HEAVENLY FATHER.**
 - a. otherwise, Jesus would have been **JUST LIKE** every other “well-meaning” prophet who had come to this earth.

- b. the resurrection of Jesus made Jesus the **ONLY** one who paid for the sins of man and then presented Himself in a resurrected body to God the Father.

C. The **EVIDENCE THAT JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD.**

1. He **appeared to Peter**

Vs. 5a – “and that **He appeared to Peter.**”

- a. Peter was perhaps the most unlikely person to believe that Jesus came back from the dead
- b. for, although Peter exclaimed that he would never deny Jesus, **HE DID SO THREE TIMES!**
- c. **IT IS OBVIOUS THAT PETER DID NOT BELIEVE** that Jesus would come back from the dead.
- d. Peter would need “physical evidence” of Jesus’ resurrection

2. He **appeared to the twelve**

Vs. 5a – “and that He appeared to Peter **and then to the twelve**”

- a. where were the disciples when Jesus was arrested – **THEY FLED!**
- b. they too, did not believe that Jesus would come back from the dead
- c. they too needed evidence of the resurrection

3. He **appeared to 500**

Vs. 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.”

- a. **DID YOU GET THAT? - Jesus appeared after the resurrection to 500 men AT THE SAME TIME!**
- b. this means that, in order to certify, after the resurrection, that each and every man literally saw the resurrected Jesus, **THEY WOULD HAVE HAD TO AGREE THAT THEIR STORIES ALL WERE THE SAME!**
 - 1. as one has said, if all of these men were interviewed for **fifteen minutes** to hear their parallel stories, it would have taken some **125 hours to hear all of their testimonies!!**
 - 2. How could 500 men all agree with what happened **IF IT WERE NOT TRUE?**
- c. consider what **Chuck Colson** said about the possibility that all of the 500 men “made up this story” of seeing the resurrected Jesus.
 - 1. Colson was the Special Counsel to the President during the Nixon Administration
 - 2. Colson was caught, with others in the administration, with a cover-up of breaking into the Watergate Hotel to get information from the Democratic Party.
 - 3. He personally experienced an attempt to “cover-up” this break in by all of the parties involved.
 - 4. Quotes:
 - a. “Even the prospect of jeopardizing the President we had 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 . . . After just a few weeks, the natural human instinct for self-preservation was so overwhelming that the conspirators, one by one, deserted their**

leader, walked away from their cause, and turned their backs on it all.”

- b. What does this have to do with resurrection?** Just this, as Colson states it: “If one is to assail the historicity of the resurrection and therefore the deity of Christ, one must conclude that there was a **conspiracy – a cover-up if you will – by eleven men with the complicity of up to five hundred others. To subscribe to this argument, one must also be ready to believe that each disciple was willing to be ostracized by friends and family, live in daily fear of death, endure prisons, live penniless and hungry, sacrifice family, be tortured without mercy, and ultimately die – all without ever once renouncing that Jesus had risen from the dead.”**

4. He appeared to Paul

Vs. 8 – “and last of **all he appeared to me also**, as to one abnormally born.”

- a. Jesus Christ even appeared to the Apostle Paul, WHEN PAUL WAS A JEW PERSECUTING CHRISTIANS**

1. Paul not only did **not** believe in the resurrection of Jesus before this time . . .
2. He was working to rid the world of people who did
3. only a literal presentation of Jesus Himself would have convinced Paul that Jesus was, indeed, real
4. and Paul was so impressed with seeing the resurrected Lord that he gave up his life as a Pharisee and gave his life to telling others of Jesus!

- b. Please realize that Jesus appeared to Paul some 2 or 3 years AFTER THE RESURRECTION.**

D. A QUESTION ABOUT THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

1. Let me ask you a question – What do **you think** happened to Jesus Christ after He was crucified?
2. Some believe that Jesus did not actually die, but fainted from the beating and the crucifixion and later escaped from the tomb where they placed Him.
3. I like what **Pastor Don Hawks** said about this possibility.
If, as some have claimed, Jesus was not dead, but only weakened, the guards and the stone would have stopped his escape. Roman soldiers closely guarded the tomb when Jesus’ body was laid. As well, the grave entrance was sealed by an enormous boulder. **After being beaten half to death by Roman soldiers, hung on a cross for six hours, pierced by the spear of his executioners to confirm his death, and wrapped, as was the custom, in 100 pounds of linen and spices, Jesus would have been in no shape to roll a two-ton stone uphill, outwit 16 Roman soldiers and then appear radiantly to his disciples.”**

Conclusion:

1. Now, do I expect you to believe in the resurrection just because I may have made you more open to the possibility?
 - a. Even though I believe that Scripture and history do confirm the resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - b. There is actually only **one real way** for a person to find out.
2. **John 11:25** – “Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. **He who believes in me will live**, even though he dies;”
 - a. Some years ago, a man visited a church that I was pastoring
 1. I asked him if he believed that Jesus died and came back from the dead
 2. he said that he had always been taught that
 3. I then said, well, do you really believe it.
 4. He said he did not
 - b. Today, that man believes in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, because the risen Christ has touched his life
3. Are you willing today to “find out” if Jesus Christ came back from the dead?