

# Passion Week 2026-Part 3

## *“Resurrection Sunday”*

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier  
(4/5/2026)

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Welcome to our Resurrection Sunday Service—and Part 3 of our ‘Passion Week’ series.

### **John 20:1–10 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now on the first *day* of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw *that* the stone had been taken away from the tomb. <sup>2</sup> Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.” <sup>3</sup> Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. <sup>4</sup> So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying *there*; yet he did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying *there*, <sup>7</sup> and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup> Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. <sup>9</sup> For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.

It seems incredible to me that the resurrection of Jesus took His disciples by surprise. I’m taken back because He had told them four different times that once they got to Jerusalem, He was going to be arrested, crucified but on the third day—He would rise from the dead!

Early in His ministry He had said, “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*” (John 2:19)

Later Jesus used the Prophet Jonah to illustrate His own death, burial, and resurrection—

*“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”* (Matthew 12:40)

Yet the morning of His resurrection—Jesus’ disciples were clueless as to why the tomb was empty!

### **John 20:11a (NKJV)**

<sup>11</sup> **But Mary** [Magdalene] **stood outside by the tomb weeping...**

The first two words are striking—“**But Mary.**”

The other two disciples (Peter and John) went home—“**But Mary stood...**”

Mary’s love and devotion for her Lord was incredibly powerful—she had been forgiven much and therefore she loved much! Mary Magdalene has been wrongly called a *prostitute* by many—but that is biblically inaccurate. She is never called a prostitute in the Bible, but rather it says of her in the gospels that Jesus cast ‘*seven demons*’ out of her—which no doubt meant that she was heavily involved in the occult in some way.

You see, demons can't force their way into a person's life to possess them—they have to be *invited* in by that person opening a door to them through an occult technique of some kind like using Tarot Cards or practicing visualization or TM (transcendental meditation).

If you ask people why they get involved in the occult—they will often tell you, '*to gain power*'—as in power to curse their enemies or make someone fall in love with them, etc. But whatever '*power*' Satan bestows on people, it's always a 'hook' to grab them, to enslave them and ultimately to destroy them—as Jesus said, "*The devil comes to steal, kill and destroy!*" (John 10:10)

I think it's safe to say that prior to meeting Jesus—Mary led a miserable life. I can't comprehend the torment of a person who is possessed by *one* demon—let alone by *seven*! Mary's life before Jesus must have been a life of absolute torture, misery and hopelessness.

It reminds us of the life of another demon possessed person and the mental and physical anguish he lived with on a daily basis—

**Mark 5:1–5 (NLT)**

<sup>1</sup> So they arrived at the other side of the lake, in the region of the Gadarenes. <sup>2</sup> When Jesus climbed out of the boat, a man possessed by an evil spirit came out from the tombs to meet him. <sup>3</sup> This man lived in the burial caves and could no longer be restrained, even with a chain. <sup>4</sup> Whenever he was put into chains and shackles—as he often was—he snapped the chains from his wrists and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him. <sup>5</sup> Day and night he wandered among the burial caves and in the hills, howling and cutting himself with sharp stones.

This was Mary's existence before Jesus came into her life—but when she met Jesus, her life changed in ways that most people cannot even comprehend—truly '*old things*' passed away and everything in her life became brand new! (1 Corinthians 5:17)

Jesus with simply the word of His power drove the darkness of the devil out of Mary's life and in its place brought in the Light of God! As such, Mary was no longer the slave of Satan—Jesus set her free and she became a child of the Living God! Don't you know she absolutely loved Jesus for setting her free from the powers of darkness that had enslaved her—and in response she committed her life to Him, fully and completely!

We are living in very dark and demonic times—where the devil is trying to capture people's thinking like never before—especially young people who are the most open to new ideas and experiences. Hollywood knows this and has produced many movies and TV shows with occult themes which I believe are purposely designed to hook young people into the occult and take them away from Christianity.

When the movie 'Harry Potter' first came out the website for the movie had a link to an actual Wiccan website containing real incantations and spells in an effort to hook people into witchcraft and the occult. There are many reports that games like "Dungeons and Dragons" and "Ouija Boards" and similar games have led to actual demon possession in those who play them.

Once a person opens the door of their life to the demonic, they become heavily *oppressed* and, in some cases, *possessed* and owned by those demons and the only power strong enough to set them free is the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives which they can only receive by believing in and accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior.

People that get caught up in things like witchcraft, the occult, the New Age and other metaphysical practices are not our enemies—they are 'seekers' looking for meaning in life and have been taken captive by the devil to do his will.

Resurrection Sunday is all about being set free from bondage to the devil—in whatever form that bondage takes (drugs, alcohol, pornography...etc.)

Resurrection Sunday is all about the hope of finding new life in Jesus—eternal life—resurrection life!

This is the theme of John's Gospel. The purpose for which John the Apostle wrote his gospel was so that people could have eternal life—a purpose he clearly states at the end of his gospel when he said—

**John 20:30–31 (NKJV)**

<sup>30</sup> And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

The Greek word he uses for **life** is *Zoë*, a word that means *spiritual* life, or in other words—the life of God. The Bible defines *Zoë* life as a dynamic life—a fruitful life—a joyful and fulfilled life. It's a life that Jesus Himself said was abundant and David in Psalm 23 described as overflowing.

**But here's the problem**—if I were to go around asking people to define the concept of '*life*'—for many it would be a little hard to nail down. Most people today would probably try to define life in terms of '*a quality of living*.' They would say that life is about achieving a certain level of happiness based on success in their chosen career field which brings them affluence, material possessions and possibly even fame.

But this abundant life that Jesus spoke of isn't *external* as many believe and teach—in other words, it isn't an abundance of money or possessions or earthly success.

This life is *spiritual* in nature—as Jesus said in John 6:63, "*The words I speak to you are spirit and life*".

Look, money can buy you *things* but not happiness, *books* but not wisdom. Money can buy you a quality of *living* but not a quality of *life* (the first being outward, the second being inward). In fact, Jesus warned us against trying to define our lives in terms of our possessions when He said—

**Luke 12:15 (NLT)**

<sup>15</sup> ...“Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own.”

You see, eternal life (*Zoë*) isn't just a *quantity* of life—it's a quality of life.

The thing that makes eternal life so wonderful and so appealing is not its '*quantity*' (never ending) but its '*quality*' (fullness of joy and the abundance of peace). Eternal life wouldn't be appealing if it simply meant—“*life stretched out into eternity*” or “*life that never ends*.” In that regard, eternal life wouldn't be desirable if that life was painful, hopeless and empty—like being paralyzed and not being able to move or feed yourself or even get out of bed.

That wouldn't be *living* it would be existing—a miserable existence that wouldn't be a blessing but the biggest curse imaginable if prolonged forever (people in hell will live forever but that won't be a blessing!).

What makes the eternal life that Jesus gives so appealing and desirable is that it is never ending life in all of its fullness, richness, joy, and blessing—because it's the life of God in us!

**Let me come at this another way**—not only does *Zoë* life come from Jesus—it is only found in Jesus.

It's not that Jesus just *gives* this life—He *is* this life! (Colossians 3:4 and John 1:4)

Inside Jesus (where all true believers live) there is spiritual/everlasting life and outside of Jesus (where all unbelievers live) there is no spiritual life only separation from God now and then in hell forever. But the moment a person receives Jesus as their Lord and Savior (by faith)—at that instant they are connected to God where the Spirit of God fills them, and the life of God begins to flow thru them.

**John 4:13–14 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup> Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of [*living*] water springing up into everlasting life.”

**John 7:38–39 (NKJV)**

<sup>38</sup> He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” <sup>39</sup> But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

**The question is:**

- Why aren't more *Christians* experiencing this dynamic spiritual life in their own lives on a daily basis?
- I mean where is the *resurrection* life that Jesus promised those who belong to Him?
- Where is the power over sin?
- Where is the abundant, dynamic, overflowing life that Jesus promised would be theirs?

Listen, the life of the Spirit (aka 'resurrection life') is a life that a person can only enter into through death. We see this exemplified in the life of Jesus who was crucified on Friday and then rose from the dead in resurrection power on Sunday. And when it comes to us the same is true, that to experience the power of Jesus resurrection in our life we must first go to the cross and die—because—crucifixion Friday precedes resurrection Sunday.

*“I'm trying pastor! I'm really trying to crucify my flesh but I'm having a hard time doing it! But I'm going to keep trying till I get it right...!”*

Listen, I believe you're sincere when you say you're trying your best to crucify your flesh, but can I make a suggestion—**STOP!** Stop because you don't need to do what God has already—**DONE!**

**Galatians 5:24 (NKJV)**

<sup>24</sup> **And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

Here's the thing about crucifixion—you can't crucify yourself! You can't commit suicide by crucifixion—someone else has to crucify you.

In the Greek, the word '**crucified**' is an aorist, passive verb. The aorist tense means something that happened in the past and is a 'done deal'.

But also, the verb in the Greek is in the 'passive voice' which speaks of an act done to you and not done by you—because again, you can't crucify yourself someone else has to crucify you. Yet, when most Christians read Galatians 5:24 (and other passages like it in the New Testament)—it sounds like God is telling us that it's all up to us to '*kill*' (crucify) our flesh and its sinful practices.

That interpretation is responsible for much of the 'legalism' we see in the Church which has led to '*holiness churches*' which put tremendous amount of pressure on people to adhere to rigorous lists of 'do's' and 'don'ts' if they want to be right with God and get into heaven someday.

But when Paul says in Galatians 5:24—"***And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires***"—he's not saying that 'real' Christians *have* crucified their flesh—but phony Christians *haven't* (those still wrestling with sin in their lives).

What Paul is saying is that—*our* part in our crucifixion was to receive Jesus as our Savior—at which time the Holy Spirit filled us and crucified us in Christ. Now we are to *reckon* ourselves dead to sin every day—

**Romans 6:6–7, 11-12 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup> knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. <sup>7</sup> For he who has died has been freed from sin...<sup>11</sup> Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. <sup>12</sup> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

The word '**reckon**' is the translation of a Greek word that simply means "to believe" ('reckon' is a faith word), "*to believe that what God says in His Word is true is true in my life—it's a settled fact!*"

A lot of people in the Positive Confession/Word of Faith Movement use Romans 6:11 to teach that if you want something, like a healing or financial prosperity, what you need to do is to "**reckon**" it to be true because, when you *reckon* it to be true—you'll *make* it true.

But this Greek word doesn't have anything to do with *wishful* thinking—or in other words, it's not an activity that *makes* something come to pass or happen because you believe strongly about it and *will* it to be so. It is understanding and appropriating (acting upon) something that is already true or has already happened.

Again, the idea is that you believing it doesn't *make* it true—  
it is true now believe it and act upon that truth!

The word is actually a bookkeeping or accounting term which speaks of recording in my ledger (check book) an amount that accurately corresponds to what exists in my account.

One author had this to say on the subject—

*"If I only have \$100 in my checking account but using wishful thinking I write down \$1000—not only will that not make it true if I begin to write checks against that imaginary amount—I will get myself into financial and even legal trouble as a result!"*

To say it again, to **reckon** means, "*To believe what God has said is true in your life. To believe what He has done for you. To believe that God has given something to you (placed into your account) and now you believe it and act upon it by faith!*"

**Romans 6:11 (NKJV)**

<sup>11</sup> Likewise you also, **reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

This is a statement of fact that as Christians—we are no longer the slaves of sin. Now, that doesn't mean we won't ever sin again—it just means we don't *have* to sin.

It means that we are no longer the *slaves* of sin bound by our fallen nature to do what it wants to do (as was the case before we got saved), we are now free in Christ to live the life He wants us to live—the resurrection life of the Holy Spirit!

But listen, just as we couldn't *crucify* ourselves, the Holy Spirit had to do that at the moment of salvation—we also can't raise ourselves from the dead either (a corpse can't raise itself—but Jesus can and did!

This tremendous spiritual truth is illustrated in the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11).

Warren Wiersbe—

*“When Jesus arrived at Bethany, Lazarus had been in the tomb four days; so, there was no question about his death—and by the power of His word (“Lazarus, come forth!”) Jesus raised His friend from the dead!*

*But when Lazarus appeared at the door of the tomb, he was wrapped in grave clothes. So, Jesus commanded, “Loose him, and let him go!” He had been raised “in newness of life” but he couldn't walk in newness of life until the grave clothes were removed.*

*Many Christians are like that, they have been raised in newness of life but they're still bound by the grave clothes of ignorance or unbelief and so they can't walk in that new life.”*

Too many Christians are “*betweeners*”—they live between Crucifixion Friday and Resurrection Sunday. They have believed in the power of Jesus' death on the cross to save them—but not in the power of His resurrection life to live His life through them to give them victory over sin and make them holy!

**And one last thing**—we are living in the last days—and as the Bible warns us that the closer we get to Jesus' return, the more apostasy (unbelief) would take hold in local churches.

There are a lot of dead churches out there that people attend looking for Jesus.

But it's like the women who came to the tomb looking for Jesus that first resurrection Sunday morning, only to have the angel say to them—“*Why do you seek the living among the dead?*” (Luke 24:5)

**It's only those churches who embrace the biblical Jesus  
and love and obey His word—  
that are churches the living Christ dwells in.**

It doesn't matter how much they talk about 'love' with their rainbow flag out front and the words, “*We love everyone!*” on the marquee. Any church that embraces and celebrates sin is a *dead* church that doesn't know Jesus Christ!

Don't seek the living Lord Jesus in a dead, liberal, woke church—as the angels went on to say—

*“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!” (Luke 24:5-6)*

Woke, liberal churches are tombs for the dead and as Jesus said, “*Let the dead bury their dead—you follow Me!*”

Believe in Him and receive Him as your Lord and Savior—and the truth of Resurrection Sunday will live in your heart all year long!

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If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

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