



THE CREED

WHAT WE BELIEVE



4/15/2022 - Easter

Kevin Maloney

Week 8 - “On the third day He rose again from the dead”

On Good Friday, Rome did to Jesus what they had done to any number of would-be Messiahs and aspiring kings before. They put Him to death. There had been plenty of other Messianic movements like Jesus’s, and each time, the “messiah” was executed and the movement fizzled out as the followers scattered in fear, and it was over.

So it seemed that the little Jesus movement was over, too. And for sure, on Saturday, all of his followers felt like they had the rug pulled out from under them. Their whole world had fallen apart, all of their hopes were dashed, they thought this was the end of a bad story, of a giant hoax.

They probably had relatives who warned them years ago - this guy is just a cult leader, don’t get caught up. These messiahs never pan out. You have a successful business, don’t leave it to run after this guy. This Jesus talks a good game, but anyone can claim to be able to forgive sins, anyone can claim to be God, anyone can conjure up a few illusions and make you think they’re miracles.

So these followers of Jesus pushed all of their chips in and bet it all on this guy, and on Friday their hopes were dashed. Their heads spun on Saturday as they waited in fear for any news of what would happen to them now.

But then something happened. As the Creed says, **“On the third day He rose again from the dead.”**

And the resurrection of Jesus from the dead caused the movement of Jesus not to die

with his death, but to grow larger and stronger and more joy-filled than ever in a burgeoning community of his followers.

The movement didn't die with the death of Jesus, because Jesus triumphed over death. For two thousand years Christians have been singing songs looking back and celebrating it. Early Christians sang

1 Corinthians 15:55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And they sang it as a way of spiking the ball in the endzone and rubbing that victory in death's face. Anyone can talk a good game, anyone can claim to be God. But you have to be God to conquer death. And Jesus did. So we celebrate him, and worship Him as God.

And what happened on that first Easter morning and in the days after set in motion the biggest world-changing movement in human history. And, joining in that movement today, we aren't just celebrating the death of a martyr, we aren't just celebrating someone in history who loved enough to give His life, though we are celebrating that. We are celebrating the fact that on the third day he rose from the dead.

And it wasn't just a spiritual resurrection ("he resurrected in our hearts") or a metaphorical resurrection ("he still lives with us in spirit.") He really, bodily, physically rose and didn't just conquer death in our sentiments and feelings. In the real world, in His real body, after descending to the dead, He got up from death in that tomb.

And I hope the one thing we take away from the service today is that we believe that.

That we believe on the third day He rose again.

Because it was the resurrection that caused real faith to be born in those first followers of Jesus who had their hopes dashed. And by reading their stories, hearing the account, and seeing the faith that it created in them, we can have the same faith created in us.

And if you're here as a Christian who has been in church forever, believed forever, I hope the reminder of the resurrection is enough to so refresh out faith so that we will repent again and live like this is real - because if the resurrection of Jesus is real, and it is, it is

the most important truth in the universe and completely worth giving every bit of our lives to.

Matthew 28 1 Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

So two women are going to the tomb early Sunday morning. This was normal practice, for women to go to the tomb, and to mourn by wailing out loud. So they expected to go and wear themselves out with weeping, and then probably to spend the day mourning with friends and relatives.

2 And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. 4 And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. 5 But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." 8 So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

When the women get to the tomb, they see the stone rolled away and an angel whose appearance is like lightning.

And the angel says, "He is risen. He is not here! He is risen, just like he said! So go tell the guys." So they ran away.

Now Matthew's account of all of this was a very early account. It was already being cited by other authors in 95 AD, it was written at the testimony of eyewitnesses to these things, not hundreds of years later as a myth.

It's written like an historical account, and written to tell the truth about what happened, not to create a really believable tale that didn't actually happen. In their day, because of rampant sexism, the testimony of women wasn't considered to be reliable. So if you are trying to make up a story about Jesus rising from the dead, you would want to make it

sound like there were reliable witnesses, a few men showed up at the tomb first.

But this story is not written like a fabrication and a legend. It's written as it actually happened.

And it is written not to man's standards for what makes reliable witnesses, but God's. God said these women were a reliable witness, he appeared to them first. And the reason they wrote that down was because that's what really happened, it wasn't because they were trying to make up a believable story, because they could have done better to make it more believable in their day.

Despite what people thought in their day, these women were reliable, and they got their friends who were also reliable and they confirmed it - He wasn't there, He is risen.

And we know that this kind of thing just doesn't happen. People don't rise from the dead.

Nobody on their own power had ever come back from death before this, and nobody has resurrected on their own power since. People don't rise from the dead.

And so as Christians who affirm that Jesus rose, we believe that there is more to the universe than what meets the eye. We believe there is a God over all of it, who made all of it, who set laws in motion, but who also at times intervenes in the natural world and does the miraculous. We Christians believe that on Easter, God made something happen that just doesn't happen.

When you have a friend scheduled to come over for dinner next week, and the friend dies, you don't wonder whether that dinner might still happen. That event is pretty much canceled at that point.

But Christians believe Jesus died and not long after that ate a fish dinner with his followers. And a story as outlandish as that is going to create some doubts.

But there is no denying that somewhere around 33 AD, a group of people suddenly completely changed their view of the world, their view of God, and their plans for their lives.

I think the strongest piece of evidence that the resurrection happened was that the Christian church formed - and it formed quickly - out of many people that had to radically

change their world view to accept it.

Once people are adults, they usually don't make radical changes in their personalities. We grow and change, but usually our personalities and preferences and habits are pretty firmly set by the time we're in our late twenties.

In fact, probably, the kind of music you like to listen to is probably the kind you started liking in your teens and early twenties. You don't hear people say, "My grandmother really loved classical music, but then at age 70 she started really getting into Metallica.

We tend to find our ruts in our twenties and stay there.

It takes a radical event to jolt us out of those ruts and really change us.

But around 33AD, a group of men and women in Jerusalem changed dramatically, all around the same time.

History and the Bible are loaded with story after story of people who had no room in their world view or in their religion for a God who became a man and then died and rose again.

In his book, The Reason for God, Tim Keller points out that the first followers of Jesus, who were mainly Jewish, had no room in their worldview for God becoming a man. For them to come to worship a human being as divine would have seemed like "blasphemy."¹ But hundreds of Jews claimed to be eyewitnesses of Jesus after his resurrection.

People who believed God would never become a man started saying that it was true because they saw him after the resurrection.

People who were opposed to Jesus and hated his followers became his followers because they saw him.

And what explanation could we have for that?

Some have suggested that people claimed to see the resurrected Jesus because of hallucinogens. There is a growing acceptance of the theory that the origins of the major religions can be explained by the use of hallucinogenic drugs in their followers.

¹Timothy Keller, The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism. (New York: Penguin, 2008), 218.

Now if one person was claiming somebody had risen from the dead, you could certainly chock that up to magic mushrooms.

But over 5,000 came to faith in the first couple of months after the resurrection.

One person can hallucinate. Hundreds of people wouldn't all hallucinate at the same time. Some of you might be thinking, "Well I was at woodstock and" - at least then there were hundreds of different hallucinations happening - hundreds don't have the same hallucination. But thousands of people converted to him because they saw him or they knew someone who did.

And you have to explain that somehow.

People don't change their mind on something that's that big of a deal overnight.

If you turn on the TV tomorrow and see that AOC is endorsing Trump - you are going to dig for some kind of explanation. Something radical must have caused that change.

Something happened. And if the resurrection didn't happen, we have to come up with some other explanation for the explosion of Christianity in first century Jerusalem.

Some would say that it was just a lie, a story, that spun out of control. A couple of disciples felt dumb for following him, so they decided to tell everyone he rose from the dead.

But we know they really believed it because so many of them were tortured and killed and would NOT back away from their story. Blaise Pascal said "I [believe] those witnesses that get their throats cut."²

If they had made up the resurrection story to try to gain fame or influence or money, they certainly would have renounced the story when they were threatened with death. If they had stolen Jesus body from the tomb, they may have stuck with that story when it was going well, but these people had their homes and property taken away, they had their children killed, and they were tortured and died but REFUSED to renounce the story. Because it was true.

² As quoted in Timothy Keller, [The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism](#). (New York: Penguin, 2008), 218.

To them, it was not just a myth or a legend that changed them, but the historical reality of the risen Christ. The story was true.

Maybe the authorities stole his body because they didn't want his tomb to become a shrine, some rallying point for Christians who want to overthrow Rome.

But Christianity exploded instantly because these people believed Jesus rose from the dead. Christians started turning the world upside down.

And if the authorities didn't like that, they then could have produced the body and destroyed Christianity - because the whole thing was built on the claim that Jesus rose from the dead. Without it, there was no Christianity. But they never did produce the body.

Maybe they misplaced His body. They went to the tomb and it was empty, because they got the wrong tomb. And oops, the world's biggest religion got started. But it wasn't only the empty tomb that caused people to believe. They would have come up with other explanations for the empty tomb just like people try to today.

I lose my keys all the time and home. And I don't first resort to some story about my keys coming alive and walking away. I do what you do, I blame my wife and my kids - I come up with a more plausible story. I'm not going to make up a story about my keys coming alive and then stick to that story. Unless my keys walk up and start talking to me, then I'll tell that story.

But they actually claimed to see HIM after the resurrection, not only an empty tomb. They witnessed, not only an empty tomb, which could have a few different far more plausible explanations, but they witnessed Jesus Himself, risen from that tomb. They talked with him, and put their fingers in the hole in his side, and ate with Him. It was Him.

Maybe he never really died - Maybe the cross knocked him out, they put him in the cold tomb, and there he woke up. But the Romans knew how to kill a guy.

And even if he somehow survived all of that, how in the world did he get the strength to roll a stone away 3 days later? If he was buried alive after all of that, he would just die in the tomb, producing a body.

So if he didn't rise from the dead, what happened?

All of the evidence leads us to believe that he rose.

And if this is true, and it is, then it is the best news you've ever heard.

1) You are loved by God and can be accepted by God - no more trying to earn his approval through religion

1 Corinthians 15:1-5 1 Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

This takes care of sin and removes guilt - Your guilt can be removed.

You don't have to ignore your conscience, you don't have to numb your conscience, you can have your conscience cleansed by the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus for you.

2) Death does not have the final say

Funerals changed when christianity came on the scene- there's mourning, but there are flowers there

Romans 6:5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

3) God will direct all things for your good

Romans 8: 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died--more than that, who was raised--who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. **35** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? **36** As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be

slaughtered." 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Believe the Gospel.

The Gospel is the message that we were alienated from God by our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3), but Christ died in our place as the scriptures had said He would (1 Corinthians 15:3, Luke 24:46.) He rose on the third day, as confirmed by many witnesses (Luke 24:46, 1 Corinthians 15:5-8). By repenting (Luke 24:47) and believing (1 Corinthians 15:2), we receive the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:47).

You don't go out from here and work hard to become a Christian. But now, in your seat, you can call out to Him in whatever words you want. And if you're turning, trusting, and receiving Him by faith, He will make you one now.

Christians, in light of the resurrection, we are called to go all-in on Jesus. Those first followers gave it all, including their lives, knowing that Jesus would resurrect them, too.

And while most of us aren't going to be called to be killed for our faith, all of us are called to live like this is real.

Which means:

Obedience to Jesus - we can't say the resurrection is true and then deliberately disobey Him, thinking we know better. We disobey because we disbelieve.

Trustingly Waiting for Jesus

Wrapping our Hopes up in Jesus.

And certainly, we all fall short of living like the resurrection is a reality.

And as we fall short, as we inevitably do, we confess our sins to Him.

Prayer of Confession:

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Assurance:

Titus 3:4-7 “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Works Cited During the Apostles’ Creed Series (This is a Work in Progress)

The Creedal Imperative by Carl Trueman

Christless Christianity by Michael Horton

Christian Apologetics by Cornelius Van Til

This book takes into account the “noetic effects” of sin. That is, sin corrupts our minds and our wills, so that scientific and philosophical proofs alone cannot lead us to God. The need is for the power of the Spirit to overcome the circular reasoning of the secular worldview. This book is a needed addition to the above books because it provides an explanation for how someone becomes savingly convinced of the faith.

The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way by Michael Horton

A unique and refreshing systematic theology that explains the major doctrines of the Christian Faith.

Christian Theology by Millard J. Erickson

This serious systematic theology textbook explores each of the main areas of theology, with a strong biblical foundation and fair treatment of opposing views.

The Deity of Christ edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson

To Everyone an Answer, edited by Beckwith, Craig, and Moreland

This book presents the case for God's existence, for Christ, and for miracles. It answers philosophical, cultural, and religious challenges to the Christian faith. 20+ authors each write in an area of their specialty in this edited volume.

The Knowledge of the Holy by A.W. Tozer

Orthodoxy by G.K. Chesterton

Considered one of G. K. Chesterton's best works and a masterful apologetic, the British critic and philosopher makes compelling arguments here as to the rationale of belief and more. In its Preface, Chesterton writes that the purpose of this book is to "attempt an explanation, not of whether the Christian faith can be believed, but of how he personally has come to believe it."

The Reason for God by Tim Keller

This book answers a number of common philosophical arguments against the existence of God, including the problem of evil. Keller's intelligent and humble approach is helpful for those who doubt, for those who are skeptical, and for the believers aiming to help both see Jesus more clearly.

Reasonable Faith by William Lane Craig

This extensive work builds a case for the Christian faith starting with the existence of God, and then answering the problem of historical knowledge (which is important in proving the resurrection.) From there he explains who Jesus understood Himself to be, followed by an extensive historical proof for the resurrection of Jesus, and refutations of the claims against the resurrection.

The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism by Timothy Keller

Reformed Dogmatics by Harman Bavinck -

This is a four volume work on Christian Theology written by the great Dutch Calvinist theologian.

The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self by Carl Trueman.

This book explains so much of how modern people think of themselves. It expands on the corrupt way of thinking that jettisons the past and strives to find the true self in an unencumbered state of nature as opposed to in glorifying God and enjoying

Him forever. This seeking after the self finds its expression in many facets of the sexual revolution, and explains why our culture is the way it is in our day.

Signature in the Cell by Steven C. Meyer

Westminster Shorter Catechism

This is one of the greatest summations of the Christian faith ever written by English speaking people.

What we Believe: Understanding and Confessing the Apostles' Creed by R.C. Sproul