

**Luke 23:50 – 24:12**  
**Easter 2010**

Since last March we have been going through Luke's gospel – one of four accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus and now we are at the very end of His life on earth – He has been crucified and is hanging on the cross. This morning we will see Him placed in a tomb for the weekend and then resurrect from the dead.

Everything in Christianity hinges on the fact that Jesus raised, literally, bodily, from the dead.

The Apostle Paul said: 1 Cor 15:14 if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain...you are still in your sins... (19) If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

There is plenty of information out there to prove that the resurrection was a historical event – yes, you can find some people who say it never occurred, but you can also find people willing to say that aliens are visiting earth and conducting experiments on humans.

If you want documentation and reasoning for why you should believe in the resurrection look into Josh McDowell's classic Evidence That Demands a Verdict or read any of Gary Habermas's stuff – these guys and many others have already done a great job researching everything and stocking up all the footnotes for anyone that has questions about whether the resurrection really occurred.

So instead of going back down those trails and repeating their arguments I want to tackle the question – **why does it matter?** We see stuff on CNN and read headlines all day long about things that really *occurred*, but how much of it really *matters* to us? How does a car bomb in Lahore or a mother giving birth to octuplets or Panda being moved to a new zoo affect me? Unless you have some kind of personal connection to those events, they just don't affect you too much even though they are true.

The resurrection isn't like that – it isn't trivial, it can radically alter your life if you are willing to acknowledge it. But in order to understand why, we must first understand why He died and rose.

Let's take those in order – now if you have been studying through Luke with us, you know the short answer of why Jesus was crucified is that the leaders of the Jewish nation and religion didn't like what He had to say about God because it threatened them and their traditions and power so they falsely tried Him and manipulated the Roman leadership into permitting His execution.

But why was He even here? Why did God send Him? Because sin had entered into God's perfect creation and brought with it death, disease and decay. That all happened not long after Creation in the Garden when Adam and Eve chose to do what they wanted to do instead of what God told them to do and ate from the only tree in the whole Garden that God had declared off limits.

When they chose to do that they broke something they couldn't fix and God took it on Himself to repair the damage through Jesus.

I was thinking about that last week as I was finally repairing something in my garage.

Ben and the Totem

Even though it was an accident – Ben broke this thing and there was no way he could repair it – if I wanted it fixed, I would have to do it myself.

That's the kind of situation we are in with God – we wind up breaking things we can't fix. But the damage we do isn't just to some wood carving – it's to God, others, ourselves and the Creation.

We commit sins of commission – things we do, and sins of omission, things we should have done, but didn't.

Now that takes on two forms:

Sin (technically defined) – missing the mark – just not being good enough no matter how hard we try, doesn't even have to be intentionally malicious – like Ben

Transgressions – willful, intentional defiance – you know it's wrong and you do it anyway.

But the bottom line is – no matter what the mixture is in your life of missing the mark and open rebellion, you're not perfect – you're full of chips, cracks, and holes that need to be filled. God has every right to just let you go, throw you out with the trash and make something new. But He doesn't.

That is why Jesus went to the cross. He came and shed His blood so we could be 'repaired' by being born again. That's the first half of the gospel – that Jesus died for our sins – and it's where we pick up Luke's story:

[50](#)Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man,[51](#)who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God.[52](#)This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.[53](#)Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid.[54](#)It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. [55](#)The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid.[56](#)Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments.

On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

[1](#)But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared.[2](#)And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb,[3](#)but when they went in they

did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.<sup>4</sup> While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel.<sup>5</sup> And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?<sup>6</sup> He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee,<sup>7</sup> that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.”

As far as the disciples were concerned Jesus was dead. All they could hope to do was to show a little respect for his body.<sup>1</sup> When they came and found an empty tomb, they didn't know what to make of it until the angels rebuked them with the reminder that He had said this would happen.

The resurrection is the second half of the gospel and had been part of God's plan all along – the part that we, like His disciples, are too quick to forget. The result is a lopsided understanding.

The gospel is often portrayed as a rescue – that Jesus pulls us out of the river that is headed for the waterfall – and that is true, but once He gets us on the shore He doesn't just abandon us, He has plans for us.

We're saved FROM something (mercy), BUT we are saved FOR something (grace).

First He pulls us out of the negative, but then He gives us new life – which pushes us into the positive.

The angelic rebuke helped some lights come on – “oh yeah, He did say something like that huh?”

<sup>8</sup>And they remembered his words,<sup>9</sup> and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.<sup>10</sup> Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles,<sup>11</sup> but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.<sup>12</sup> But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

The disciples thought everything was going to stop with Jesus' death – they didn't realize that it was only just beginning.

Over the following days Jesus will reappear to them several times and explain more about what is happening: they've been severed from the guilt and weight of past sins, given new life, and soon they will be given the Holy Spirit who enables them to live this new life in power.

Later they will take the message of all they experienced across the known world – it will outlast centuries of persecution, it will outlast the Roman Empire, and it will continue to spread throughout the globe and throughout history to the present day.

Which brings us to today and our question – Why does the resurrection matter? I read an article in this week's edition of **Newsweek** that says 80% of all Americans believe in Heaven – so the

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<sup>1</sup> Hughes, 398.

vast majority of you in here believe in heaven, and therefore, by necessity, you believe in a resurrection – but may I ask, how are you going to get there?

I read an article in last Sunday's Washington Post Magazine that shared one person's thoughts – the article is about the Islamic funeral tradition of washing the dead.

40 major sins

Muslims aren't the only ones who think like this – the idea that we need to somehow work for our forgiveness is found everywhere. But there's a problem with this mindset – I've never seen a spiritual scoreboard – I don't know who's up, me or God. I don't know how far behind I am or how many bodies I'll need to wash to get myself caught up.

Contrast that with what the apostle Paul says Christians have to do to enter Heaven:

Turn with me to Romans 4

The story of Abraham – the Father of the nation of Israel who God used as the starting point for almost everything He was going to unfold in the Bible – He made a promise to Abraham and Abraham accepted it:

[20](#)No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,[21](#)fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.[22](#)That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.”

IOW - All he did was believe God was going to do what He said He would.

[23](#)But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone,[24](#)but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,[25](#)who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

Here we see both sides of the gospel: He was **delivered** up and **raised** up – and we receive the benefit of it all **by simply believing God will do what He has promised**. In Abraham's case that meant making Him the father of a nation, blessing him, and giving his descendants a special land – the land of Israel. In our case, that means He will forgive our sins and grant us new life that begins now and stretches into eternity.

And there are some bonuses that go along with that:

[1](#)Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.[2](#)Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.[3](#)More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,[4](#)and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,[5](#)and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

We receive:

- Forgiveness of sins
- Peace with God
- The hope of the glory of God even when we suffer
- The love of God which is poured into our hearts
- The gift of the Holy Spirit

And we receive it all, not on the basis of anything we have done, but simply by trusting in Him. So, are you going to waste your time and energy trying to make up for a past that you can never single handedly clear or are you going to simply trust in Jesus and be saved through faith?

The resurrection matters because it means two things – 1. That Jesus actually died to pay for your sins, it really happened – you can't have a resurrection without a death. *If that death occurred, there is an offer of forgiveness extended to you – but you must receive it.* 2. That God gives new life – not just mercy, but grace too and then, like the cherry on top, He gives us the Holy Spirit to help us live that new life here on earth.

If you're here this morning and you haven't received all of this, by faith, I encourage you to do it today – tell God He's right and you've been wrong, that you want Him to forgive you for all your wrong, and that, by faith, you want to receive forgiveness of sins and newness of life from Jesus and that you want to live life from this point forward according to His plans and purposes and not your own.

For those of you who are already believers in Christ I strongly encourage you to think about what it means to have this new life – you already know you blew it with the old life and you believe that God has forgiven you for that – but how are you doing with this new one? Are you surrendering it to Christ and receiving all the blessings He wants to give or is it just business as usual?