

## THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

PRESENTED BY  
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GREEN LAWN CHURCH OF CHRIST

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WE SPEAK TONIGHT OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD. OUR TEXT IS TAKEN FROM THE 24TH CHAPTER OF LUKE'S GOSPEL AND THE FIRST 12 VERSES: "NOW UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, VERY EARLY IN THE MORNING, THEY CAME UNTO THE SEPULCHRE, BRINGING THE SPICES WHICH THEY HAD PREPARED, AND CERTAIN OTHERS WITH THEM. AND THEY FOUND THE STONE ROLLED AWAY FROM THE SEPULCHRE. AND THEY ENTERED IN, AND FOUND NOT THE BODY OF THE LORD JESUS. AND IT CAME TO PASS, AS THEY WERE MUCH PERPLEXED THEREABOUT, BEHOLD, TWO MEN STOOD BY THEM IN SHINING GARMENTS; AND AS THEY WERE AFRAID, AND BOWED DOWN THEIR FACES TO THE EARTH, THEY SAID UNTO THEM, WHY SEEK YE THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD? HE IS NOT HERE, BUT IS RISEN; REMEMBER HOW HE SPAKE UNTO YOU WHEN HE WAS YET IN GALILEE, SAYING, THE SON OF MAN MUST BE DELIVERED UNTO THE HANDS OF SINFUL MEN, AND BE CRUCIFIED, AND THE THIRD DAY RISE AGAIN. AND THEY REMEMBERED HIS WORDS, AND RETURNED FROM THE SEPULCHRE, AND TOLD ALL THESE THINGS UNTO THE ELEVEN, AND TO ALL THE REST. IT WAS MARY MAGDALENE, AND JOANNA, AND MARY THE MOTHER OF JAMES, AND OTHER WOMEN THAT WERE WITH THEM, WHICH TOLD THESE THINGS UNTO THE APOSTLES. AND THEIR WORDS SEEMED TO THEM AS IDLE TALES, AND THEY BELIEVED THEM NOT. THEN AROSE PETER, AND RAN UNTO THE SEPULCHRE; AND STOOPING DOWN, HE BEHELD THE LINEN CLOTHES LAID BY THEMSELVES, AND DEPARTED, WONDERING IN HIMSELF AT THAT WHICH WAS COME TO PASS."

IT IS SAID THAT ON ONE OCCASION A MOHAMMEDAN AND A MISSIONARY WERE HAVING A CONVERSATION AND THE MOHAMMEDAN TURNED TO THE MISSIONARY AND SAID, "YOU KNOW, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MOHAMMEDANISM AND CHRISTIANITY IS THAT WHEN A MOHAMMEDAN GOES TO MECCA HE FINDS THERE THE REMAINS OF HIS PROPHET, BUT WHEN THE CHRISTAIN GOES TO JERUSALEM HE FINDS NOTHING THERE BUT AN EMPTY TOMB." TO WHICH THE MISSIONARY REPLIED, "YES, THAT IS INDEED THE DIFFERENCE, FOR THE MOHAMMEDAN KNOWS THAT HIS PROPHET IS DEAD, BUT THE CHRISTIAN KNOWS THAT HIS PROPHET LIVES, FOR THERE IS NO TOMB THAT COULD HOLD HIM."

AND I THINK THAT IS THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND THE OTHER RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD. FOR WHILE IT IS POSSIBLE TO HAVE A RELIGION WITHOUT A RESURRECTION, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO HAVE CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST. IT WAS, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE FACT OF THE RESURRECTION THAT RESUSCITATED THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS, AND GAVE THEM THE COURAGE THAT THEY NEEDED TO GO INTO ALL OF THE WORLD AND PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST. IT WAS THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST WHICH GUARANTEED UNTO US THE NEW TESTAMENT, AND I THINK AS WE LOOK AT THE NEW TESTAMENT AND ITS HISTORY--ITS STORY--WE CAN SAY THAT UNLESS THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD IS TRUE THAT JESUS DIED IN VAIN, THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST IS SHATTERED, AND THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED UPON NOTHING MORE THAN A FARCE. THEREFORE IT SHOULD BRING GREAT JOY TO THE CHRISTIAN TO BE ABLE TO TURN TO THE NEW TESTAMENT, TO REALIZE THAT IT TEACHES THAT JESUS HAS INDEED BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD, AND TO KNOW BEYOND THAT, THAT RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST HAS SUPPORTING ITS REALITY AND ITS TRUTHFULNESS AN ABUNDANCE OF EVIDENCE WHICH CANNOT BE GAINSAID; TO KNOW THAT THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST DOES NOT DEPEND SIMPLY UPON FAITH, BUT THAT THE SAME KIND OF EVIDENCE TO WHICH WE MIGHT LOOK TO SUPPORT ANY OF THE HAPPENINGS IN THE LIFE OF JULIUS CAESAR--THAT SAME KIND OF EVIDENCE AND EVEN IN GREATER ABUNDANCE CAN BE FOUND TO SUPPORT THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD. BUT IN SPITE OF THE ABUNDANCE OF THE EVIDENCE, IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT BOTH LOGIC AND FAITH DEMAND THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION, WE FIND THAT THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF

PREJUDICE AGAINST BELIEVING ANYTHING THAT THE BIBLE TEACHES TO BE SUPERNATURAL, AND SO LET US LOOK AT THE RESURRECTION, THAT WHICH IT MEANS TO US AS CHRISTIANS, AND EXAMINE BRIEFLY THE EVIDENCE THAT CAN BE GIVEN TO SUBSTANTIATE ITS TRUTHFULNESS.

I THINK FIRST OF ALL WE OUGHT TO LOOK AT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION, FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD IS NOT SOMETHING WHICH IS JUST INCIDENTAL TO NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY. THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS FROM THE DEAD IS A BASIC, IT IS A FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIANITY. IF THERE WERE NO OTHER PASSAGE IN THE BIBLE DEALING WITH THIS SUBJECT THAN I CORINTHIANS 15 THIS WOULD BE ENOUGH, PARTICULARLY IN VERSES 12-19 THE APOSTLE PAUL CATALOGUES SOME GREAT CATASTROPHIES THAT BEFALL THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IF CHRIST IS NOT RAISED FROM THE DEAD. HE SUGGESTS THAT IF CHRIST BE NOT RISEN THEN THE APOSTOLIC PREACHING IS VAIN. IF CHRIST IS NOT RISEN THEN THE FAITH OF THE CORINTHIANS IS VAIN. IF CHRIST IS NOT RISEN, THEN THE APOSTLES ARE FOUND FALSE WITNESSES. IF CHRIST IS NOT RAISED, THEN THE CORINTHIANS ARE YET IN THEIR SINS. IF CHRIST BE NOT RAISED FROM THE DEAD, THEN THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP IN CHRIST ARE PERISHED--THERE IS NO HOPE BEYOND THE GRAVE. AND IN THE 19TH VERSE, I THINK HE SUMS IT ALL UP WHEN HE SAYS THAT "IF IN THIS LIFE ONLY WE HAVE HOPE IN JESUS CHRIST, WE ARE OF ALL MEN MOST MISERABLE." PAUL SAID THEN, THAT THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST IS BASIC TO THE ENTIRE TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

WE FIND AS WE EXAMINE THE TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT THAT A GREAT MANY OF THE OTHER DOCTRINES HINGE ON THE TRUTHFULNESS OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD. FOR INSTANCE, IN EPHESIANS 1 THE APOSTLE PAUL DISCUSSED THE FACT THAT JESUS IS HEAD OVER ALL THINGS TO THE CHURCH WHICH IS HIS BODY. BUT IF YOU EXAMINE I CORINTHIANS 1:19-23 VERY CAREFULLY, YOU WILL DISCOVER THAT THE FACT OF THE RESURRECTION IS ONE OF THE REASONS THAT GOD HAS MADE CHRIST TO BE HEAD OVER ALL THINGS TO THE CHURCH, AND THE INTIMATION IS THAT IF CHRIST IS NOT RAISED FROM THE DEAD, THEN CHRIST IS NOT THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH. SO IF THE CHURCH IS TO HAVE A HEAD, THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION MUST BE TRUE.

IN ROMANS 5:8 WE FIND A VERY PRECIOUS PROMISE THAT WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS, GOD COMMENDED HIS LOVE TOWARD US IN THAT CHRIST DIED FOR US. AND THEN IN THE NEXT VERSE IT GOES ON TO DESCRIBE HOW WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST AND THEN IN THE 10TH VERSE IT SAYS WE ARE SAVED, WE ARE RECONCILED BY HIS DEATH AND IF THIS IS TRUE, THEN HOW MUCH MORE SHALL WE BE SAVED BY HIS LIFE? NOW QUITE OFTEN WHEN WE READ THIS PASSAGE, WE THINK IMMEDIATELY OF THE EARTHLY LIFE OF CHRIST. BUT I THINK IF YOU WILL EXAMINE THE CONTEXT CAREFULLY, AND PARTICULARLY AS THE TERM "LIFE" IS PUT INTO RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BLOOD THAT WAS SHED AND THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST, YOU WILL DISCOVER THAT PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF ROMANS 5:8-10, WHERE THE PERFECTING OF THE SALVATION OF THE CHILD OF GOD IS DISCUSSED, SPEAKS NOT OF THE EARTHLY LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST, BUT OF THE RESURRECTED LIFE OF THE SON OF GOD. IN ESSENCE THEN, WHAT PAUL IS SAYING IS THIS--THAT THE PERFECTING OF THE SALVATION OF GOD'S PEOPLE IS DEPENDENT UPON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD.

IF YOU WILL GO THEN TO ACTS 5:30-31, PETER IS PREACHING AND HE SAYS THAT THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST WAS AN ESSENTIAL FACTOR IN GOD'S GRANTING "REPENTANCE UNTO ISRAEL AND REMISSION OF SINS." NOW WHILE THE IMMEDIATE APPLICATION IS TO ISRAEL, THE GENERAL APPLICATION HAS TO DO WITH REPENTANCE AND REMISSION OF SINS, AND IT HAS, THEREFORE, BEEN ESTABLISHED THAT WHEREVER REPENTANCE AND REMISSION OF SINS IS PREACHED, WHEREVER IT IS OFFERED, WHEREVER IT IS RECEIVED, IT IS DEPENDENT UPON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD. IN SHORT THEN, IF THERE IS NO RESURRECTION OF JESUS FROM THE DEAD, THERE IS NO ROOM FOR REPENTANCE AND THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS REMISSION OF SINS.

NOT ONLY IS IT IMPORTANT TO THESE BASIC BIBLICAL DOCTRINES BUT THE MIRACLE OF THE RESURRECTION STANDS AS A CENTRAL POLEMIC, STANDS AS A CENTRAL ARGUMENT, FOR ALL OF THE OTHER MIRACLES OF THE BIBLE. SO OFTEN WHEN WE START DISCUSSING MIRACLES WE START WITH THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND OR WE START WITH SOME OTHER, IF I MIGHT USE THE EXPRESSION, LESSER MIRACLE. BUT IF WE WOULD BEGIN WITH THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD, IF THIS BE TRUE, THEN IMMEDIATELY EVERY OTHER MIRACLE IN THE BIBLE BECOMES EASY TO BELIEVE, AND WHETHER OR NOT CHRISTIANS HAVE REALIZED THIS, INFIDELS HAVE, FOR IT IS AGAINST THE MIRACLE OF THE RESURRECTION, IT IS AGAINST THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION, THAT INFIDELS FROM THE VERY DAY OF THE RESURRECTION ITSELF BEGAN TO DIRECT THEIR ASSAULTS OF UNBELIEF. YOU GO BACK TO THE NEW TESTAMENT AND YOU READ THAT ON THE VERY DAY OF RESURRECTION THE JEWS STARTED THE FIRST LIE, THE FIRST ARGUMENT AGAINST ITS TRUTHFULNESS AND SAID, "YOU SOLDIERS GO AND REPORT THAT WHILE YOU SLEPT THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CAME AND STOLE HIS BODY AWAY." COME INTO THE SECOND CENTURY AND THERE YOU WILL FIND ONE OF THE SO-CALLED CHURCH FATHERS, ORIGEN BY NAME, WRITING IN A DEBATE WITH ONE CELSUS WHO WAS A PAGAN AND ONE OF THE THINGS THAT ORIGEN IS DEFENDING AGAINST CELSUS IS THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE PAGANS DID NOT WANT TO BELIEVE IT. WE COME INTO THE MODERN DAY OF UNBELIEF AND THERE WAS A MAN WHO LIVED IN THE 19TH CENTURY BY THE NAME OF DAVID STRAUSS. THIS MAN HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS "THE MOST TRENCANT AND REMORSELESS OF THE ASSAILANTS" AGAINST THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD. AND THIS MAN IS CREDITED WITH MAKING THE STATEMENT THAT THE RESURRECTION IS THE "CENTER OF THE CENTER, THE REAL HEART OF CHRISTIANITY AS IT HAS BEEN UNTIL NOW." AND SO THESE PEOPLE, THESE UNBELIEVERS, REALIZE THAT, IF THEY CAN SUBVERT THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD, THEY HAVE GONE A LONG WAY IN DISPROVING THE TRUTHFULNESS OF THE WORD OF GOD AND SHOWING THAT JESUS IS NOT GOD BUT SIMPLY MAN. AND THE INFIDELS HAVE NOT LET UP FOR IN THE LAST ONE HUNDRED YEARS WE HAVE SEEN A RENEWED EMPHASIS IN THEIR ATTACKS UPON THE RESURRECTION.

BUT NOW WHAT IS THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD? I THINK EVEN AMONG UNBELIEVERS YOU WOULD FIND THAT PRACTICALLY ALL OF THEM WOULD SAY THEY BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST IF YOU WILL JUST LET THEM DEFINE WHAT THEY MEAN BY THE TERM "RESURRECTION." IF YOU WILL JUST LET THEM SAY THAT THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE GRAVE IS SIMPLY SYMBOLICAL OF THE RESURRECTION OF HIS INFLUENCE, OR THE RESURRECTION OF HIS SPIRIT AS IT IS MANIFESTED IN THE CHURCH, OR IF YOU WILL LET THEM SIMPLY EXPLAIN IT AWAY AS BEING MYTHOLOGICAL OR SOMETHING ELSE, THEY WILL SAY, "WE BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS FROM THE DEAD." BUT LET US EXAMINE THE NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION, AND IF THIS DOCTRINE BE SO, THEN LET US ESPOUSE IT, BUT IF IT BE NOT SO, THEN LET US ATTACK IT WITH ALL OF THE FERVOR OF OUR BEING.

THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES THAT THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD WAS AN ACTUAL RESURRECTION. NOW THERE IS POPULAR AMONG UNBELIEVERS (AND THIS HAS BEEN RESURRECTED LATELY BY H. J. SCHOWFIELD IN HIS BOOK, THE PASSOVER PLOT) THE THEORY THAT JESUS SIMPLY SWOONED UPON THE CROSS--THAT JESUS ONLY APPEARED TO BE DEAD. THEY THEN TOOK HIM DOWN FROM THE CROSS AND WHEN THEY PUT HIM INTO THE TOMB THE COOLNESS OF THE TOMB WHICH HAD BEEN HEWN OUT OF THE ROCK CAUSED HIM TO BE RESUSCITATED, COMMONLY KNOWN THEN AS THE SWOON OR RESUSCITATION THEORY. IT SAYS THAT CHRIST WAS NOT REALLY DEAD, AND I AM CERTAINLY GLAD THAT THESE MODERN-DAY THEOLOGIANS ARE HERE TO TELL US THAT CHRIST DID NOT DIE FOR THEIR STATEMENT GOES AGAINST EVERY OUNCE OF EVIDENCE THAT THE FIRST CENTURY BRINGS TO US. THEY CAN SEE IT SO MUCH MORE CLEARLY YOU KNOW NINETEEN CENTURIES THIS SIDE OF THE FACT. THIS THEORY CANNOT BE SO, FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT SAYS THAT JESUS WAS ACTUALLY DEAD. IF YOU WILL TURN TO MARK 15:44, 45 YOU WILL READ THAT PILATE MARVELLED IF HE WERE DEAD ALREADY--THEY HAD COME FOR THE BODY OF JESUS

CHRIST. PILATE MARVELED IF JESUS WERE DEAD ALREADY AND WASN'T GOING TO LET THEM HAVE THAT BODY UNTIL HE KNEW HE WAS DEAD. AND SO HE SENT A CENTURIAN OUT FOR THE SPECIFIC PURPOSE OF DETERMINING WHETHER OR NOT JESUS WAS LIVING OR DEAD. AND THE 45TH VERSE SAYS "WHEN HE KNEW IT (THAT HE WAS DEAD) OF THE CENTURION HE GAVE THE BODY TO JOSEPH." THIS ROMAN SOLDIER WENT OUT AND LOOKED AT THE BODY AND CAME BACK AND SAID TO PILATE, "HE IS DEAD." AND WHEN HE KNEW IT THEN HE LET THEM HAVE THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST. THE SAME THING IS TAUGHT IN JOHN 19. THEY CAME TO BREAK THE LEGS TO HASTEN DEATH AND WHEN THEY SAW THAT JESUS WAS DEAD, JOHN 19:33, THEY BRAKE NOT HIS LEGS. IF YOU WILL TURN TO MARK 16:1 YOU WILL DISCOVER THAT WHEN THE LADIES CAME ON THE RESURRECTION MORNING TO COMPLETE THE PREPARATION FOR BURIAL WHICH THEY HAD HAD TO HASTILY PERFORM ON THE DAY OF HIS BURIAL, THEY CAME EXPECTING TO ANNOINT A DEAD PERSON. TURN TO JOHN 19:34, 35 AND THERE YOU WILL READ THAT WHEN THEY BRAKE NOT THE LEGS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRST ONE OF THE SOLDIERS THRUST A SPEAR INTO HIS SIDE AND JOHN SAYS "FORTHWITH CAME THEY OUT BLOOD AND WATER." NOW DOCTORS SAY THAT THIS INDICATES THAT THE BLOOD IN THE BODY OF JESUS HAD BEGUN TO SEPARATE--THE PLASMA FROM SOME OTHER SUBSTANCES I THINK--AND THIS HAPPENS ONLY WHEN THE BODY IS DEAD BEYOND QUESTION. WHEN JESUS APPEARED TO HIS DISCIPLES ON THE DAY OF THE RESURRECTION THERE IS NOTHING TO INDICATE THAT HE APPEARED TO THEM HALF DEAD, AND IF JESUS HAD BEEN CRUCIFIED AND ENDURED THE TERRIBLE AGONY AND THEN, PRECEEDING THE BURIAL HAD BEEN PEIRCED IN THE SIDE AND HIS BLOOD HAD POURED FORTH, HAD THEN BEEN WRAPPED IN ALL OF THESE GRAVE CLOTHES WITH THE SPICES THAT ARE USED--SOME ESTIMATING AROUND 100 POUNDS OR SO--IT IS HARD TO REALIZE HOW A MAN LIKE THAT AND IN THAT CONDITION COULD COME TO TAKE OFF THE GRAVE CLOTHES FROM THE INSIDE OUT, AND THEN STILL BE STRONG ENOUGH, NOT HAVING SUFFOCATED, TO ROLL AWAY THE STONE ABOUT WHICH A GROUP OF WOMEN WERE WORRYING BECAUSE THEY IN GOOD HEALTH COULD NOT REMOVE IT TO COMPLETE BURIAL PREPARATION, AND THEN HAVE STRENGTH ENOUGH LEFT TO WALK AWAY WITHOUT BEING DETECTED BY THE ROMAN SOLDIERS. THE ENTIRE THING IS COMPLETELY ABSURD. AND THEN WE HAVE THE WORDS OF JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF WHO IN REVELATION 1:18, "I AM HE THAT LIVETH, AND WAS DEAD; AND, BEHOLD, I AM ALIVE FOREVERMORE." JESUS CHRIST DIED UPON THAT CROSS AND THE LIFELESS BODY OF JESUS WAS TAKEN AND PUT IN THE TOMB. YET, ON THE THIRD DAY JESUS CAME FORTH.

HOW DID HE COME FORTH? SCRIPTURE TEACHES THAT IT WAS A BODILY RESURRECTION. SOME SEEM TO BELIEVE THAT THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST WERE JUST TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN AND THAT THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST REPRESENTED HIS PHYSICAL DEATH, HIS PASSING FROM LIFE, AND THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST THEN REPRESENTED HIS PASSING INTO A SPIRITUAL EXISTENCE. AND SO HIS DEATH AND HIS RESURRECTION TOOK PLACE AT THE SAME TIME. YOU ASK THEM THEN HOW THEY ACCOUNT FOR THE APPEARANCES OF JESUS CHRIST, SOME TEN OR ELEVEN OF THEM THAT ARE LISTED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT FOLLOWING HIS DEATH? AND THEIR ANSWER IS, "WELL, IT WASN'T HIS BODY, IT WAS HIS SPIRIT." OR THE ANSWER IS THAT THEY DIDN'T SEE CHRIST, THEY SIMPLY HAD AN OBJECTIVE VISION WHICH MEANS THAT THIS WAS SIMPLY SOMETHING THEY SAY IN A VISION THOUGH THEY ADMIT THERE WAS SOME OBJECTIVE REALITY THAT CAUSED THE VISION TO BE. OTHERS NOT SO KIND SAY THEY DIUN'T REALLY SEE ANYTHING, THEY WERE JUST SO ANTICIPATING TO SEE THE RISEN LORD THEY HAD AN HALLUCINATION AND THEY WERE JUST DECEIVED INTO BELIEVING THEY SAW JESUS CHRIST. AND THE MORE MODERN CONCEPT IS JUST SIMPLY TO SAY, "IT DOESN'T MAKE A WHOLE LOT OF DIFFERENCE" AND EVADE THE WHOLE PROBLEM. YOU MIGHT BECOME SUSPICIOUS OF ANY MAN PREACHING ON THE RESURRECTION TODAY WHEN HE STARTS TO MAKE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE EASTER MESSAGE AND THE EASTER FAITH. ACCORDING TO HIM, THE EASTER MESSAGE IS THE SAME AS THE EMPTY TOMB AND THE APPEARANCES OF JESUS CHRIST. BUT THE EASTER FAITH WHICH HE DRAWS FROM THIS MYTH OF THE EMPTY TOMB IS SIMPLY THE CONVICTION THAT THE CRUCIFIED ONE GAINED A VICTORY OVER

DEATH. THERE WAS NO REAL RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD BY JESUS CHRIST. HE JUST IN HIS DEATH GAINED A VICTORY OVER DEATH, AND WHEN YOU HAVE THAT FAITH, YOU HAVE GOT THE EASTER FAITH, THEY SAY, AND THE ONLY THING THAT IS IMPORTANT. BUT THESE THINGS CANNOT BE SO. IN THE FIRST PLACE, THE HALLUCINATION THEORY CAN'T BE SO BECAUSE OF THE NUMBER INVOLVED. SOMETIMES ONE MAN WILL HAVE AN HALLUCINATION, BUT YOU DON'T FIND WHERE A NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TOGETHER HAVE THE SAME ONE AT THE SAME TIME. AND IN THE SECOND PLACE, THE DISCIPLES WERE NOT IN A PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE OF MIND TO HAVE AN HALLUCINATION OF JESUS RAISED FROM THE DEAD. FOR IF YOU WILL REMEMBER THE TEXT WE READ WHEN THE WOMEN WENT AND TOLD THEM THAT JESUS HAD BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD THEIR WORDS WERE SIMPLY IDLE WORDS AND THEY BELIEVED THEM NOT. IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE THAT JESUS HAD TOLD THEM THAT THE SON OF MAN MUST BE CRUCIFIED AND AFTER THREE DAYS RISE AGAIN. IT MADE NO DIFFERENCE THAT JESUS HAD BEEN TELLING THEM THAT HE WAS GOING TO COME FORTH FROM THE TOMB. IT WAS NOT THAT THEY REFUSED TO BELIEVE; RATHER, IT WAS THEY FAILED TO UNDERSTAND.

IN ADDITION TO ALL OF THIS, ALL OF THESE THEORIES DEPEND UPON THE FACT THAT THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST WAS NOT RAISED, BUT RATHER THAT HIS SPIRIT APPEARED AS SOME KIND OF SPIRITUAL APPARITION, MANIFESTATION, OR HALLUCINATION. BUT EVERY STATEMENT THAT THE BIBLE HAS TO MAKE WHICH DEALS WITH THE SUBJECT INDICATES THAT IT WAS THE BODY OF JESUS WHICH CAME FORTH FROM THE TOMB. IN LUKE 24:39,40 JESUS SPEAKING OF HIS RESURRECTION BODY SAID, "A SPIRIT HATH NOT FLESH AND BONES, AS YE SEE ME HAVE." HE SAID, "I'VE GOT FLESH AND I'VE GOT BONES." WHEN MATTHEW DESCRIBED THE WOMEN WHO MET HIM ON THE MORNING OF THE RESURRECTION, HE SAID THESE WOMEN TOOK HOLD OF HIS FEET. THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SOME LITERAL FEET UPON WHICH THEY LAID HOLD. DAVID HAD PROPHESED THIS WOULD BE THE CASE, FOR IN THE 16TH PSALM AND THE 10TH VERSE HE HAD PROPHESED THAT "THOU WILT NOT LET MY BODY SEE CORRUPTION." AND IN ACTS 2:31 WE FIND THE APOSTLE PETER QUOTING THIS STATEMENT AS HAVING BEEN FULFILLED. JESUS HAD DIED AND HIS BODY DID NOT SEE CORRUPTION.

AND THEN BEYOND ALL OF THAT, THERE IS SIMPLY THE FACT OF THE EMPTY TOMB. AND I CARE NOT WHAT ARGUMENT UNBELIEVERS MAY MAKE AGAINST THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST, THERE IS ONE QUESTION THAT THEY HAVE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO ANSWER AND THAT IS "WHAT ABOUT THE EMPTY TOMB? WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST?" ABOUT THE MOST LOGICAL ANSWER THEY CAN COME UP WITH IS THE LIE THE JEWS TOLD IN THE LONG AGO AND SAY THAT THE DISCIPLES CAME AND STOLE IT AWAY. BUT YOU KNOW WHEN THE DISCIPLES CAME TO STEAL THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST, IT IS VERY DOUBTFUL THEY WOULD HAVE TAKEN THE TIME TO HAVE REMOVED THE BURIAL CLOTHES. WHY REMOVE THEM? THEY WOULD HAVE NEEDED THEM AGAIN TO BURY HIM SOMEWHERE ELSE. THE BURIAL CLOTHES WERE THERE AND THEY WERE FOLDED NEATLY, NOT AS LEFT BY SOMEONE WHO HAD DEPARTED IN A GREAT HASTE. AND SURELY IF THEY HAD COME AND STOLEN THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST AWAY, WHEN THEY STARTED PREACHING A RESURRECTED LORD AND THEY BEGAN TO BE PERSECUTED FOR SO PREACHING, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN SOMEONE WHO WOULD HAVE SAID, "NO, HE WASN'T RAISED. DON'T TAKE MY LIFE. I'LL SHOW YOU WHERE JESUS IS BURIED." YOU CAN REST ASSURED THAT THE JEWS WOULD HAVE TURNED HEAVEN AND EARTH UPSIDE DOWN TO PRODUCE THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST IF THEY COULD HAVE DONE SO. BUT YOU SEE, THEY KNEW WHAT HAD HAPPENED. IN FACT, THEY MAY HAVE HAD MORE FAITH IN THE RESURRECTION THAN THE DISCIPLES DID BECAUSE THEY WENT TO PILATE AND SAID, "NOW JESUS SAID HE WAS THE ONE TO COME FORTH ON THE THIRD DAY." THEY WERE WORRIED ABOUT IT. THEY SAID, "PILATE, YOU SEAL THAT ROCK AND YOU PUT SOME SOLDIERS OUT THERE BECAUSE WE DON'T WANT THEM TO SAY THAT JESUS CAME FORTH FROM THE TOMB." THEY SEALED THE ROCK AND THEY PUT THE SOLDIERS THERE AND STILL DEATH COULD NOT HOLD HIM.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST WAS SOMETHING UNIQUE. IT IS TRUE THAT THERE ARE ACCOUNTS OF OTHERS HAVING BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD IN THE SCRIPTURE. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT IN I KINGS WE READ OF THE RAISING OF THE SON OF THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH. AND IN II KINGS WE READ OF THE RAISING OF THE SHUNAMITE'S SON. IN MARK 5 WE READ OF THE RAISING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER AND IN LUKE 7 THE YOUNG MAN OF NAIN. AND IN JOHN 11 THE RAISING OF LAZARUS WHO HAD BEEN DEAD FOUR DAYS. IN ACTS 9 THE RAISING OF TABITHA OR DORCAS, AND IN ACTS 20 THE RAISING OF EUTYCHUS WHO HAD FALLEN OUT OF THE WINDOW WHILE CHURCH WAS GOING ON. BUT ALL OF THESE PEOPLE YOU SEE DIED AGAIN. ALL OF THESE WHO WERE RAISED FROM THE DEAD WERE RAISED SIMPLY TO RETURN TO THEIR TOMBS, BUT THIS IS NOT SO WITH THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST. HIS WAS UNIQUE, NOBODY EVER LOOKED UPON ANY OF THESE OTHERS AS BEING CONQUERORS OF DEATH. BUT THEY SAW IN THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST SOMETHING DISTINCTLY UNIQUE. THEY SAW IN THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST SOMETHING UNPRECEDENTED IN THE HISTORY OF HUMANITY.

NOW THIS UNIQUE, BODILY RESURRECTION--WHAT IS ITS CREDIBILITY? CAN WE BELIEVE IT? CAN WE BELIEVE IT IS SO? LET US LOOK FIRST SIMPLY AT THE ARGUMENT FROM TESTIMONY AND THAT IS WHAT WE HAVE USED IN TALKING ABOUT THE RESURRECTION THUS FAR. THE TESTIMONY WE HAVE FROM MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE AND JOHN, PAUL, PETER, JAMES AND JUDE THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS INDEED RAISED FROM THE DEAD. THERE ARE THREE THINGS TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION WHEN THE VERACITY OF AN ISSUE IS AT STAKE AND YOU ARE DEALING WITH TESTIMONY. ONE OF THESE IS THE QUESTION, "ARE THE WITNESSES COMPETENT?" NUMBER TWO, "ARE THE WITNESSES SUFFICIENT IN NUMBER?" NUMBER THREE, "ARE THE WITNESSES OF GOOD REPUTATION?" THE ANSWER TO ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS MUST BE YES WHEN WE ARE DEALING WITH THE WRITERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. THE WITNESSES WERE COMPETENT. THEY SAW THE RISEN LORD. THE WITNESSES WERE SUFFICIENT IN NUMBER. THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE IS SUFFICIENT TO ESTABLISH ANYTHING AND THERE WERE MORE WITNESSES THAN THAT TO THE RESURRECTED CHRIST. WERE THE WITNESSES OF GOOD REPUTATION? AS FAR AS I KNOW, THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO WOULD SAY THEY WERE NOT OF GOOD REPUTATION ARE THOSE WHO ACCUSE THEM OF PERPETRATING A RELIGIOUS FRAUD. AND WHILE THEY SAY THAT THESE MEN TOLD A LITTLE WHITE LIE BACK HERE ABOUT THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD EVEN THEN THEY DON'T IMPUGN THEIR CHARACTER, THEY SAY THEY WERE GOOD AND GODLY MEN. SO WHEN IT COMES TO BEING CREDIBLE WITNESSES AND THEIR TESTIMONY BEING BELIEVABLE WE MUST ACCEPT THE RECORD OF THE RESURRECTED CHRIST. WE SAID THAT THE EVIDENCE OF THE RESURRECTION IS THE SAME KIND AS THAT WHICH WOULD SUPPORT ANY ACT IN THE LIFE OF JULIUS CAESAR, AND I WOULD SUBMIT TO YOU THAT AS THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST IS ONE OF THE BEST ATTESTED HISTORICAL FACTS OF THE FIRST CENTURY KNOWN TO MAN! IF WE CAN BELIEVE THAT JULIUS CAESAR LIVED AND REIGNED IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE, WE CAN BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST LIVED, AND DIED, AND ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD.

BUT THEN YOU SEE, GOING BEYOND THIS, THERE ARE SOME THINGS FOR WHICH WE SIMPLY CAN'T ACCOUNT IF JESUS WERE NOT RAISED FROM THE DEAD. ONE OF THEM WE HAVE MENTIONED ALREADY-- THAT IS, THE EMPTY TOMB. HERE IS AN EFFECT AND THE QUESTION IS, WHAT CAUSED IT? FOR EVERY EFFECT, THERE MUST NOT ONLY BE A CAUSE, THERE MUST BE AN ADEQUATE CAUSE. WHAT CAUSED THE EMPTY TOMB? WE HAVE DISCUSSED IN, I THINK, SUBSTANCE EVERY THEORY THAT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED: THE SWOON, THE HALLUCINATION, THE THEORY THAT THE DISCIPLES STOLE THE GRAVE, AND NOT ONE OF THEM CAN ACCOUNT FOR THE EMPTY TOMB. THERE IS ONLY ONE THING THAT CAN STAND AS AN ADEQUATE CAUSE FOR THE EMPTY TOMB AND THAT IS THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

LOOK AT ANOTHER EFFECT, THE LORD'S DAY. WHAT CAUSED IT? DID THE DISCIPLES SIMPLY BEGIN THE LORD'S DAY, WORSHIP ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK BY THEMSELVES AND BY THEIR OWN AUTHORITY? LOOK AT THE DISCIPLES BEFORE WE DECIDE THAT QUESTION. MANY OF THEM

WERE POOR FISHERMEN, THE REST OF THEM HAD NOT MUCH POSITION, AND AS WE LOOK AT THEM AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE JEWISH NATION IT IS VERY EASY TO LEARN THAT THEY WERE NOT IN MUCH OF A POSITION TO CHANGE ANY OF THE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF THE JEWS. AND CERTAINLY BEING JEWS THEY WEREN'T ABOUT TO INTRODUCE A RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY HONORING ANY MERE MAN, WHICH JESUS WAS IF HE WAS NOT RAISED FROM THE DEAD. MAYBE IT WAS THE MEMORY OF JESUS' LIFE? NO, THAT IS NOT A ADEQUATE CAUSE. MAYBE IT WAS THE INSPIRATION THAT CAME FROM PAST CONTACT WITH HIM? THAT IS NOT AN ADEQUATE CAUSE. THERE IS JUST ONE THING THAT CAN STAND AS AN ADEQUATE CAUSE FOR WORSHIP UPON THE LORD'S DAY AND THAT IS THE MESSAGE, "HE IS RISEN." AND THAT THE DISCIPLES, BELIEVING AND PREACHING THAT MESSAGE—"HE IS RISEN"—BEGAN TO WORSHIP UPON THE LORD'S DAY, NOT BY THEIR OWN AUTHORITY, BUT BY THE AUTHORITY OF A RESURRECTED LORD AND UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF HIS HOLY SPIRIT.

LOOK AT THE CHURCH. HERE'S AN EFFECT. WHAT CAUSED IT? WE HAVE ALREADY SEEN THAT WHEN JESUS WAS DEAD AND BURIED THE HOPES OF THE DISCIPLES WERE BLASTED. THEY HAD HAD GREAT HOPES. THEY HAD HAD SOME HIGH ANTICIPATIONS. THEY KNEW THAT THE GLORY OF ISRAEL WAS COMING, THAT CHRIST WOULD RESTORE THE KINGDOM. ALL OF A SUDDEN THIS MAN FOR WHOM THEY HAD GREAT HOPES WAS DEAD AND WAS NO MORE. THEY HAD GONE BACK TO THEIR OWN AFFAIRS, THEY HAD RETURNED TO THEIR DAILY WALKS OF LIFE NOT ANTICIPATING THAT THERE WOULD BE ANY RESURRECTION. BUT YET THEY CAME BACK TOGETHER AND THEY WENT INTO ALL THE WORLD AND THEY PREACHED THE GOSPEL, THEY ESTABLISHED THE CHURCH, AND THE CHURCH GREW. WHAT CAN ACCOUNT FOR THE CHURCH? ONLY A RESURRECTED LORD.

WHAT ABOUT THE DISCIPLES THEMSELVES? WE SAY THE DISCIPLES WERE DISCOURAGED. WE SAY THAT THEIR HOPES HAD BEEN BLASTED. WE SAY THEY HAD GONE BACK TO THEIR OWN WALKS OF LIFE. WHAT WAS IT THAT TRANSFORMED THEM FROM DISCIPLES OF JESUS INTO APOSTLES OF CHRIST? WHAT WAS IT THAT TOOK THIS DISHEARTENED GROUP OF MEN AND TURNED THEM INTO SPIRITUAL CONQUERORS OF THE WORLD? WHAT WAS IT THAT TOOK THIS DISAPPOINTED GROUP AND SENT THEM WITH FEARLESS COURAGE INTO ALL OF THE WORLD PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST? IT WAS SIMPLY THE FACT THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD AND THAT HE HAD CEASED BEING A DEAD SAVIOR AND HAD BECOME A LIVING SAVIOR, AND HAD GIVEN UNTO THEM THE PROMISE, "YOU GO AND PREACH, AND I WILL BE WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD."

YES, JESUS CHRIST IS RAISED FROM THE DEAD AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST ATTESTS TO HIS DIETY, ROMANS 1:4. THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST ASSURES THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE WORK OF CHRIST BY THE FATHER IN HEAVEN, ROMANS 4:25. THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD ASSURES US THAT JESUS CHRIST STANDS AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD AS OUR HIGH PRIEST AND INTERCESSOR—ROMANS 8:34. AND AS YOU TURN THROUGH ALL OF THE PRECIOUS PAGES OF GOD'S WORD, MAKE A CAREFUL STUDY AND I THINK YOU WILL BE SURPRISED TO DISCOVER ALL OF THE BLESSINGS WHICH ARE ATTENDANT UPON THE EXPLICIT STATEMENT OF SCRIPTURE THAT GOD HAS RAISED JESUS FROM THE DEAD.

PERHAPS ONE OF THE GREATEST BLESSINGS IS THE FACT THAT IN THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD HE CLEARED A PATH FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE GRAVE TO THE THRONE OF HEAVEN. JESUS OPENED THE DOOR NOT ONLY OF THE TOMB, BUT JESUS OPENED THE DOOR INTO THE VERY PRESENCE OF GOD. AND IT IS BECAUSE WE HAVE A RESURRECTED, IT IS BECAUSE TONIGHT WE HAVE A LIVING LORD, THAT WE CAN HAVE A LIVING HOPE. AND IT IS BECAUSE JESUS HAS TRIUMPHED OVER DEATH THAT DEATH CANNOT TRIUMPH OVER US. NO, I AM NOT SAYING THAT WE SHALL NOT DIE, BUT I AM SAYING THAT THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST STANDS AS GOD'S PLEDGE THAT WE TOO SHALL BE RAISED FROM THE DEAD, (ACTS 17:31), AND THAT IF WE HAVE BEEN PLANTED TOGETHER IN THE LIKENESS OF HIS DEATH, WE SHALL BE ALSO IN THE LIKENESS OF HIS RESURRECTION, (ROMANS 6:1-6).

A CHRISTIAN WAS HAVING A CONVERSATION WITH A BRAHMIN PRIEST AND HE ASKED THAT BRAHMIN PRIEST IF HE COULD SAY, "I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE." THE PRIEST REPLIED, "YES, I COULD SAY THAT." BUT THE NEXT QUESTION WAS DEVASTATING, "YES, YOU COULD SAY THAT, BUT COULD YOU MAKE ANYONE BELIEVE IT?" YOU SEE JESUS NOT ONLY SAID IT, JESUS MADE PEOPLE BELIEVE IT. AND IT IS BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THE STATEMENT OF JESUS, "I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE," THAT WE ARE HERE. AND IT IS BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THE STATEMENT JESUS MADE, "I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE," THAT WE SEEK TO WALK IN HIS PATH.

WE ASK YOU TONIGHT, DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE? DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE? DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE THAT HE IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE AND THAT YOU CANNOT GO UNTO THE FATHER BUT BY HIM? IT IS ONE THING FOR YOU TO SAY, "YES, LORD, I BELIEVE," BUT IT IS ANOTHER THING FOR YOU TO SHOW THAT FAITH IS LIVING AND ACTIVE. JESUS IS A LIVING LORD WHO DEMANDS A LIVING, ACTING FAITH. IF YOU HAVE GOT A LIVING, ACTIVE FAITH TONIGHT IN A RISEN LORD, IF YOU BELIEVE THAT HE DIED, WAS BURIED, AND ROSE AGAIN FOR YOUR JUSTIFICATION, THEN NOT ALL OF THE POWERS OF SATAN AND HELL CAN KEEP YOU AWAY FROM JESUS TONIGHT, BECAUSE YOU WILL COME, YOU WILL COME TO THIS RISEN LORD WHO STANDS TRIUMPHANT OVER LIFE AND DEATH TO BOW IN HIS PRESENCE AND SUBMIT TO HIS WILL. YOU WILL NOT BE GUILTY OF SAYING, "WELL, I BELIEVE THIS IS NECESSARY, BUT I DON'T BELIEVE SOMETHING ELSE IS ESSENTIAL. I BELIEVE I CAN ACCEPT THIS BUT I DON'T BELIEVE I NEED THAT." YOU WILL SAY, "SPEAK, LORD, THY SERVANT HEARETH," AND WHEN JESUS SAYS, "HE THAT BELIEVETH AND IS BAPTIZED SHALL BE SAVED," YOU WILL COME GLADLY AND WILLINGLY TO DO IT. IF YOU DON'T YOU DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT KIND OF FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST AS THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. IF YOU HAVE DONE THIS AND YOU HAVE WANDERED AWAY, YOUR FAITH HAS BEEN DEAD, YOUR FAITH HAS BEEN INACTIVE, YOUR FAITH HAS NOT BEEN STRONG ENOUGH TO STAND AGAINST THE STORMS AND THE STRESS OF LIFE, JESUS STILL LOVES YOU, JESUS' DEATH STILL AVAILS FOR YOU AND HIS RESURRECTION STILL STANDS AS A PLEDGE OF HIS WILLINGNESS TO RECEIVE YOU BOTH NOW AND FOREVER MORE. WHAT A PRECIOUS MOMENT GOD HAS GIVEN TO YOU. DO YOU HAVE FAITH TO ACCEPT IT? WILL YOU COME WHILE WE STAND AND WHILE WE SING.