

Easter Morning - Resurrection and New Creation

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[0 : 00] You can open your Bibles at 1 Corinthians chapter 15. We'll be referring to that in various places this morning. Christ is risen, hallelujah. That's what we've been singing this morning.

But why is it hallelujah? Why is the resurrection so vitally important? Is it? Is it vitally important? There are many detractors today, even in the professing church.

I get a regular monthly mailing from the Church of Scotland called the Minister's Forum. And just recently it's been full of letters of those deriding the notion of the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

From within the professing church. The same thing is true of the resurrection. Many today want to debunk the whole idea of a bodily resurrection. It's not bodily, it's not physical.

Oh, Jesus is risen, but it's a psychological thing, it's a metaphorical thing. Many in the church think that by saying that kind of thing, somehow the Christian message will become more acceptable to today's secular culture.

[1 : 16] Many secularists today around us will say, of course, the Christian faith can't survive much longer in our days. But as we saw in our passage this morning, the truth is that those kind of attacks on the reality of the bodily resurrection of Jesus are not new.

They didn't come in the 21st century. They were there in the 1st century. Look at verse 12. How can some of you say that there's no resurrection of the dead? He's talking to the church in Corinth. The professing church.

It's interesting, isn't it? There are some folk today who think that somehow or other you can find a church that is perfect and pure, this side of glory. Well, the apostle Paul couldn't find any churches like that.

He wouldn't have had to write most of the New Testament if he could. So this idea that the bodily resurrection of Christ somehow was mythical or metaphorical or whatever isn't new.

It seems that the Corinthians were a church so taken up with their own spiritual benefits. Paul says, remember, that they were puffed up with their own pride, with their own arrogance.

[2 : 20] So taken up with their own gifts, with their own privileges. Somehow they seem to think, well, perhaps the resurrection's already happened, but in a kind of spiritual way.

Not a bodily resurrection of dead people. Remember in 2 Timothy 2.17, Paul says that's exactly what Hymenaeus and Philetus were teaching.

The resurrection had already taken place in that way. Rather like, you know, Mahatma Gandhi. Well, he died, but his spirit lives on. Everything he stood for, still alive in us.

That's the way Jesus is raised. Or in a more ridiculous way, like Elvis. The king lives on in all of our hearts.

All those kind of crackpot devotees dress up like him and have plastic surgery to look like him. So that's resurrection, you see. That's a spiritual, psychological energizing.

[3 : 20] That's really what we're talking about in the Christian faith. Not dead bodies who have really died coming back to life. That's, I think, what the Corinthians were saying.

You see, no, nothing like that can happen. I mean, look, some of our own people have died. And we haven't seen them rise up bodily from the grave.

So that can't be real. That's not what resurrection's about. And that, I think, is what many people believe in the professing church of Jesus Christ today. And perhaps, perhaps that's something that may be a nagging doubt in some of our minds at times.

Especially when we have to face up to the harsh and terrible reality of death. Death of one of our loved ones. A spouse. A family member. A friend.

Or perhaps when we're facing up to death ourselves. Since I've become your minister here, it's not even a year.

[4 : 26] Not even nine months. But we have lost many dear ones, haven't we? So this kind of thing is not a distant thing. It's not an unreal thing.

It's absolutely real. It's something that is absolutely at the front of our experience. And in the face of that, Paul is absolutely adamant. Do you see verse 13?

If there's no resurrection from the dead, generally, then not even Christ has been raised. It's absolutely central to everything he's saying, that the dead are raised.

If not, then everything's lost. Verse 13. Christ is still totally dead. Verse 14. Our message is a lot of codswallop. So is your faith. Verse 15.

We're liars. We're charlatans. We've been blaspheming God, talking a lot of nonsense. Verse 17. You are still guilty. You're still in your sins.

[5 : 23] Verse 18. All those beloved, loved ones of yours in Christ, your Christian brothers and sisters who have died, they are dead. They're perished. They're in hell.

Verse 19. And we are, of all people, most to be pitied. We are a pitiful, sad, totally deluded bunch. But you see, verse 20.

No. In fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. The first fruits of those who sleep. You see, for Paul and the other apostles, there's a very real sense in which the resurrection is the gospel.

It is the message. It's the resurrection that makes the death of Christ into a gospel that has power to save. You just need to look at the preaching of the apostles, Paul and the others throughout the book of Acts.

It's preaching always on the resurrection. The Christ risen. The focus is always on the fact God raised Jesus. In Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost, Peter says God raised him up, loosening the birth pangs of death.

[6 : 35] He says David foretold this, but now it's been fulfilled as God raised Jesus. It's the same in Acts chapter 4 again and again. He keeps saying God raised Jesus from the dead.

In Acts chapter 13, Paul's first great sermon that we have there. He says God fulfilled all the promises throughout the history of the Old Testament in raising Jesus. Acts 13, 32.

What God promised to the fathers, he has fulfilled to us, their children, by raising Jesus. In Acts chapter 17, do you remember when he was in Corinth? People thought he was preaching a strange God named Anastasis, which is the great word for resurrection.

Why? Because he went everywhere preaching Jesus and the resurrection. Why? Well, because the resurrection is the great fulfillment of all the hopes and all the dreams of all the prophets that came before.

Why does he not just go around preaching a gospel about how can I be born again? How can you be forgiven? Why does he go on and on about the resurrection, the resurrection of Christ?

[7 : 44] Well, it's not because the resurrection somehow is a miracle that proves that Jesus is gone. The apostles never went anywhere trying to prove the resurrection happened.

They simply proclaimed it. Christ is risen. Not either just to show that Jesus did enough in his death, in his atoning sacrifice to satisfy God, to achieve salvation, although the resurrection does declare that.

But it's much more than that in the preaching of the church. The Christian gospel, you see, is not just a message about individual piety, about your salvation and mine.

The Christian gospel is a message about the cosmic transformation of the universe. The resurrection for the apostles is the declaration of the beginning of the new age, the new creation.

A new creation that's fulfilled and at last set free forever from death and corruption. The resurrection for the apostles is the beginning of a new humanity, set free forever from decay and from death.

[8 : 55] And the resurrection of Jesus declares the beginning of that recreation and renewal of the earth, of the universe, of the whole cosmos. It's the fulfillment, we could say, of everything that the world was created for at the very beginning.

And verse 20 says Jesus' resurrection is the first fruits. It's the actual beginning of that harvest. It's the visible, tangible proof that this has actually begun in history.

In the resurrection of Jesus, the universe that we know is at last becoming what it was always meant to be. And what we sense deep down, it's always been crying out for.

Just think, within each of us, if we're honest, there is a deep sense of longing for this, isn't there? There's a sense that the world just isn't as it should be.

There must be more. We see that today, don't we, in the rise of the environmental lobby and the friends of the earth movement and so on. They're wrong in the sense that they think we can somehow save the planet, but they're right.

[10:09] They're right to sense that the planet needs salvation. That's what the Bible says. The cosmos is being recreated and saved. Just think of some of those moments, perhaps, in your own experience.

A moment of supreme pleasure. Perhaps it's something in the exalted beauty of creation. Maybe it's been at the top of some mountain in the Alps when you've been skiing. You've just been taken in by the extraordinary magnificence of the beauty around you.

Or maybe it's been somewhere in the desert or the Grand Canyon or the plains of Africa or the Victoria Falls. Wherever it might be, you've just been staggered by the sense of the grandeur of creation.

And you've thought, this should just be like this moment forever. It's breathtaking. Or maybe it's been in a moment of intense and staggering human experience.

Maybe the first time you looked on your newborn child. Or the first heady days when you fell in love. And you just think, I just want it to be like this forever.

[11:15] You see, it's like a light bulb being switched on with far, far too great a current going through it. And it just lights up with an extraordinary brilliance.

For just a split second. And you get a sense of an amazing brightness. And we've all felt that, haven't we, at times?

Just a sense of the intensity of what life can be. If only that experience could last forever. That explains.

That explains. That explains the incredible force for progress that there is in human society. Why there's such a drive to be going onwards and upwards in science, in politics, in medicine, in everything.

We sense that there's more to be had. There's more to achieve. There's more. Even Freud was right on that.

[12:17] He talked about Eros, the great life force, the great driving force that animates human beings in society. But here's the rub. We know that in reality it just isn't so.

That these moments fade. That the glory dies. That that glimpse is gone. The dream of progress does go on, but it doesn't go on unhindered, does it?

Freud was also right. He talked about Thanatos, the death force. And that's the reality, isn't it? The world is held back from what it should be.

From what all our instincts tell us that it should be. Instead, the world is, well, it's going to decay, isn't it? Experience tells us that. Science tells us that.

The world is decaying. It's heading towards disorder and chaos. The whole universe is heading towards entropy. And in our lives we come face to face with that reality, don't we?

[13:26] In death. We spend our lives hiding from it. We bury it deep down. But in the end, death is what buries all of us.

All of us here today will have one last trip to Deldowie Crematorium or Lynn Crematorium or the Necropolis or wherever it is. Death puts an end to it all, doesn't it?

No one has conquered death despite all the advances of medicine, despite all the advances in science, despite all the cosmetic industry throws at us.

I have to say often when I'm looking at my bank balance at the end of the month. I often rue the day I decided not to become a plastic surgeon. But if only death could be conquered.

Things could march on towards what we instinctively sense must be the way the world ought to be. That's what our deepest sense tells us, isn't it?

[14:30] Our instincts. But death is our greatest enemy. It's our final enemy. Death is our victor that puts an end to all of that.

So why do we so often, why do we accept the view of secular society? Once tell us, well, death is just a natural part of life.

In the face of death, with every ounce of our humanity, we cry out, no! That's wrong! It's an evil, it's terrible, it's a curse, it's an enemy.

If the world was just all a lot of chance, we wouldn't bother, would we? Just be natural. But friends, let me tell you this.

The Bible understands your instinctive feeling about that. And it agrees with you. Death is an enemy. It's the last enemy, our chapter tells us in verse 26.

[15 : 33] The last enemy of humankind is death. Death should never have been a part of our creation. It's the penalty, the Bible tells us, of our rebellion against God, against our Creator.

But the resurrection of Jesus, above all, proclaims the death of death. And it proclaims the recreation of the world as it should be without death.

Not only, not only without death and all its ruinous consequences, but also, also taking creation onto the goal of glory that it was always meant to have.

Moving it upwards and onwards towards a greater and greater glory forever and forever. That's what the Bible tells us the Christian message is. Let me just briefly explain to you the way that the Bible views the world.

And just see whether you think this meets your experience and your understanding better than that secular worldview. That it's just chance and death doesn't really matter. It's natural. The Bible tells us that God created the world perfect, that it was very good.

[16 : 46] But not that it was finished. In the sense of static, God created the world with a huge potential. It's represented in Genesis by God creating the cosmos and creating within it a beautiful garden and putting mankind into the garden.

But he doesn't just tell them to stay there. They have to fill and subdue the whole cosmos. Making the whole cosmos that God has created as wonderful and as beautiful and as fulfilled as the garden God had made.

God made humankind in his own image. To image God's glory. To bring the glory of God out of the garden to the whole of the cosmos. To glorify it. To imprint that glory on the whole universe.

And to bring it to glory. The Bible also tells us that all humanity has fallen short of the glory of God. Because of sin.

At its most basic that sin is simply rebellion against the rule and the authority of God our creator. Determines that we will rule. And we'll rule for ourselves and not for him.

[17 : 58] And the Bible says God cursed man's efforts. And that has affected the whole universe. Humans have not been destroyed utterly.

We've not utterly been stripped of our status. We still bear that image and in a sense that quest for glory. That's why we send people to the moon. That's why we send spaceships to Mars. It's part of our instinct to conquer the universe for the glory of God.

But of course now we do it not interested in God's glory but just our own. We're winning the world not for God's dominion but for our own. And that's why we've got a world full of slavery and exploitation and war and corruption.

And pollution. That's all wrong. But that's the world we know isn't it? Isn't it? And that's why the world's a mess.

Because the potential has been stripped of its authority. You put a bunch of five year old boys in a classroom. Boys with great potential. You put them there with a teacher. And let me tell you.

[19 : 05] They will grow and achieve enormous potential. Realizing it all. Take that teacher away and in half an hour you've got utter chaos.

Isn't that right? Probably doesn't take that long. But you see humanity's potential has been removed from the rule of God.

And that's why we have a world of chaos. And God can't have his universe, his creation destroyed by man's unbridled chaos.

That's why he had to judge and bring in mortality and death. You came from the dust, he says. So after your threescore years and ten you'll return to dust.

He can't allow man to go on from glory to glory. Unbridled. Wrecking all that he's done. Living forever. Destroying. Maiming. So was that the end?

[20 : 08] Well no, not according to the Bible. God could have presumably destroyed everything. Just started again. But no. He set about recreating the cosmos through redemption. He won't be frustrated.

His promise will be achieved. He's going to achieve his end of glory for his cosmos and for his image. For man. And he's going to do it through humankind. The very beginning of the Bible.

Genesis chapter 3 is the first promise. A seed of the woman. A seed of the woman. A seed of the woman. An offspring of humanity. Will overcome God's enemies. And reverse all the effects of the curse.

He'll undo the damage of man's rebellion on the cosmos. And he'll redo the perfection of God's glory in man. Both restoring God's image and bringing that image on to the glory.

The future glory that was always intended for him. Bringing him to maturation. To perfection. The goal of creation. From glory to glory.

[21 : 10] And so as the book of Genesis unfolds. We're looking for this man. This seed. And Adam and Eve have a child called Cain. Will this be the savior? Disaster. He turns into a murderer.

Genesis chapter 5. God gives Adam and Eve another son. Seth. Eve says. God has appointed me another seed. Will this be the savior? But no.

Genesis 5. The genealogy. Seth lived these years. And he died. But he has a son. Enosh. And he lives. But he died. And all through that chapter ends up.

And he died. And he died. And he died. Death. You see. Can't seem to be overcome. Then we've got Noah and the flood. And a new start for the world.

Perhaps now we'll have something. Will Noah be the one? Genesis 9.28. Noah lived 950 years.

Looking promising. And he died. But God's line of promise didn't die out.

[22 : 07] Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. And then the great nation of Israel. And at last King David. The man after God's own heart. Will he be the one? Is he the savior?

And he died. But he has a promise. 2 Samuel 7. A seed of David. And would. At last. Reign on God's throne.

As his glorious king forever. Solomon. Would it be him? Well. Despite brief hopes. No. He fell. And he died. All the history of Israel's kings.

Go from bad to worst. To utter disaster. Eventually the whole nation. Is so corrupt. And hopeless. It's cast right out of God's. Precious land. Is it all over now? Surely it must be.

The answer from the prophets. No. As with all the promises before. So. The promise will be fulfilled.

[23 : 08] The great day of the Lord. Will come. Says the prophets. The day when God's Messiah. King. Comes and rules. The day that ushers in. A new transformation of the world. A new heaven.

And a new earth. A recreated universe. The days when the blind eyes. Will be opened. When the deaf ears. Will be unstopped. When the lame. Will leap and dance. And when sorrow and sighing. Will flee away. And there will be no more death. Forever the day is coming. Says the prophets. And that's what the faithful people of Israel. Were looking for. In the first century. That's what people in the pagan world.

Too. Were looking for. Although in a much more vague way. They didn't have the clarity. Of the promises of God's people. In scripture. Future. And that's what we all instinctively sense.

The world. Must be looking for. It must become. And when Jesus. Came. Preaching. As we read in the beginnings of the gospels.

[24 : 05] He proclaimed exactly that. The kingdom of God. The new creation is here. The gospels open up. He is one who is the son of David. The son of Abraham. Man. Luke in his genealogy.

Takes us right back to Adam. The son of God. He is a new Adam. He is the seed. The one who will do. What. That first Adam. So manifestly failed to do.

He. Is the image of God. In every way. And that's what we see in the gospels. Isn't it? He is one who is utterly obedient. To all the commands of God. He is one.

Who is exerting dominion. Over the whole world. Even the winds and waves. Obey him. He is the Lord of sickness. And disease. And animals. And demons. Surely this is him.

Truly. He is the one who will not fall prey. To the curse of death. But what does each gospel tell us? And he died.

[25 : 08] Just like Adam. And Seth. And Enosh. And Abraham. And David. He died. So is everything lost? That's what the disciples thought after Easter.

Wasn't it? We thought he was going to be the Messiah of Israel. No. Because. Of Christ's resurrection from the dead.

Because of the real. Historical. Bodily. Resurrection. Of human flesh. In Jesus the Messiah. God. Because you see.

The scriptures tell us. He didn't die for his own sins. He died. For his people's sins. He gave. His life. He says. As a ransom for many. He died as a representative. To undo the curse.

Of God. He became a curse. For his people. And Jesus said that. Had to be. So that.
[26 : 04] As verse 21. Of our Bible tells us. So that. As by Adam came death. The first man. So by man came also. The resurrection.

For all. Romans 4. 25. Says he was delivered up for our trespasses. And raised. For our justification. Death.

Could not hold him. He was condemned. In the courts. Of the Jews. And the Romans. But his resurrection. Reversed. The verdict. Declared him. Righteous.

First Timothy 3. 16. Says he was justified. Declared righteous. Vindicated. By the Holy Spirit. In his resurrection. He was vindicated. As God's.

Righteous. Human. Servant. His. Man. That's why. Romans chapter 1. Verse 4. Says that. Jesus was declared. To be the son of God.

[26 : 59] In power. By the spirit of holiness. By his resurrection. From the dead. Do you see. He's not saying. The resurrection proves. That he's God. The son. He's declaring.

His humanity. As perfect. He's the son of God. He's the new Adam. He's the seed. He's. The last Adam. He's the man. That begins.

The new creation. Just as Adam. Began the old. You say to yourself. Well that's great. That's wonderful. For Jesus.

But what about me? How does it affect me? But that's the whole point. You see verse 20. Jesus resurrection. Is the first fruits. Of many. Colossians 1.

18. Puts it another way. And says. He's the first born. Over all creation. And from the dead. Romans 8. 29. Tells us that the whole purpose. Of Jesus redemption.

[27 : 56] And resurrection. Is that he should be the first born. Among many brothers. You see verse 22. As in Adam all die. That's how we are.

When we're born. We're in Adam. We're slaves to decay and death. Every one of us. But so also in Christ. Shall all be made alive. In the new creation.

In the resurrected. Cosmos. We read also in verse 45. The first Adam. Became in. In his creation. In his birth. In his.

In his raising from the dust. The first Adam. Became a living being. But the last Adam. Jesus Christ. Paul says. Became through. His resurrection. His rebirth. A life.

Giving. Spirit. For many. Do you see. Jesus resurrection. Is the first fruits. Of a great harvest. Easter day. Is the first fruits.

[28 : 52] Literally. It was. The feast of first fruits. But Pentecost. Was the beginning of the harvest. Literally.

It was. The harvest festival. When the spirit. Of the risen Jesus Christ. Is poured out on the world. As the message of Easter. As the gospel is proclaimed.

To all people. And just as the first Adam. Is told. Go and fill the earth. And subdue it. So the last Adam. Christ. Goes out to fill.

His new creation. With sons and daughters. As the firstborn. Of many brethren. Those who will bear.

Not. Not any longer. The image. Of the earthly man. The image of dust. Of mortality. But as verse 49 says. The image of the man of heaven. The risen.

[29 : 46] Glorified Jesus Christ. Do you see. Why the resurrection. Is the gospel. It's the announcement. It's the. It's the announcement.

Of the beginning. Of everything. That God promised. Right. Right from the very beginning. Of creation. For his world. And it's the realization. Of everything.

That instinctively. Deep down. We know. Ought to be the case. A world of beauty. Of wonder. Without the wreckage. Caused.

By human sin. Without the scourge. And the curse of death. That has. Belighted the whole cosmos. The message of Easter.

Is it's begun. It's begun. In the resurrection. Bodily. Of Jesus. Christ. The Messiah. The last Adam. The new man. The beginning.

[30 : 40] Of the new creation. It's begun. It's not yet completed. Look at verse 23. Christ is the first fruits. And then.

At his coming. Those who belong to Christ. Then. Verse 26. The last enemy. Death itself. Will be destroyed. But as verse 25 says.

Even now. Even now. The risen Christ. Reigns. He's putting all his enemies. Under his feet. The world. Is in his hands. Jesus. And that's why.

We can rejoice. And say. Christ is risen. Hallelujah. This is the gospel. That we've heard. In which we stand. By which we're being saved.

Friends. This Easter morning. Will you grasp. Just how wonderful. For you. Personally. And for the universe. Is the empty tomb. Of Jesus Christ. Christ. In fact.

[31 : 38] Christ. Has been raised. From the dead. Your past. Has been dealt with forever. That's what Paul says here. He was raised. For our.

Justification. So because Christ. Is raised from the dead. You are no longer. In your sins. If you're in Christ. Your guilt is gone. You've got a guilty conscience. Today. You hear.

Burdened. With things in your past. That. Perhaps you've never. Even. Been able to tell. To anybody. Is it like a noose. That hangs around your neck.

That burns. Into your innards. To make you feel. You could never. Ever. Be forgiven. Or accepted. By God. Paul says. Christ.

Is risen. And you can say. Hallelujah. You're no longer. In your sins. If you're in Christ. Because. Of that. Empty. In your future.

[32 : 35] Is secure forever. Too. Paul says. For you. And for all. Your dear ones. In Christ. Verse. 18. Those who have fallen asleep.

Have not perished. Because Christ. Is risen. Are you. Grieving this Easter. Are there. Beloved ones of yours.

That have fallen asleep. In recent weeks. Recent months. And years. For many of us. That is true. This Easter. And we have been grieving.

But the message. Of Easter Day. Says you cannot grieve. Like the pagans. Because Christ. Is risen. Hallelujah. Your loved ones. Are not perished.

They're in Christ. You perhaps facing. The shadow of your own death. This Easter. Some of us here. Have received.

[33 : 30] Diagnosis. Of. A fatal kind. Just in recent days. Perhaps. It's not you. Perhaps. It's a loved one. In Christ. Perhaps. You're just. Becoming very conscious.

Of your own mortality. Your own. Frail flesh. You're fearful. For the future. Well says verse 49. As surely as you have known. The image of the man of dust. As surely as you have been.

Mortal. So surely. You shall be raised imperishable. In the image of the man of heaven. You're in Christ. Christ is risen.

Hallelujah. The new creation has begun. Death. Has. Been. Conquered. That's why Paul can say. In 2nd Corinthians 5.

17. Behold. If anyone is in Christ. There is. New creation. New creation now. It's begun.

[34 : 27] It's real. We have a future. Because of the resurrection. Of Jesus Christ. From the dead. From that tomb. In AD 32.

Maybe all of that's just new to you this morning. Maybe you've never heard it before. Maybe you've just never really grasped it.

That's true of you then. Look at verse 23. Because that poses the question for you. All of this is true for those. Who belong to Christ.

So you've got to ask yourself. Do I belong to Christ? How do I know? How do I belong to Christ? Well that's easy. Verse 1. This is the gospel.

This is the gospel. That you receive. That you stand in. And that saves you. And the question for you is. Will you receive it? This Easter.

[35 : 30] Will you stand in it? Will you be saved by it? Romans 10. Verse 9. Says this. If you confess with your mouth. That Jesus is Lord. And believe in your heart.

That God raised him from the dead. You will be saved. For with the heart. One believes and is justified. And with the mouth. One confesses. And is saved.

For the scripture says. Everyone who believes in him. Will not be put to shame. Friends. It's my duty to tell you this morning.

You must. Believe in him. You must. Confess. His name. Because Christ. Is risen.

He's risen indeed. The only other possibility. Is that as verse 25 says.

[36 : 26] You're one of his enemies. You must believe. Christ is risen. Let's pray. Let's pray.