

Resurrection in the Old Testament

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[0:00] In all of scripture, why should we look at this this evening? Well, Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, it's a wonderful passage.

! He tells the Corinthians that your faith is futile and you're still in your sins if Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is a significant part of God's salvation plan.

And not just significant, it really does change everything. It guarantees we're forgiven. It empowers us to change. It gives us certain hope for the future and an urgent mission for the present.

And it's not just something that randomly happens at the end of the Gospels. It's been part of God's salvation plan throughout time.

[1:05] Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 15 verse 3, I'm sure we can think of many passages and pictures in the Old Testament scriptures that point us to the Lord Jesus and his death on the cross.

But what about in terms of his resurrection? Maybe we'd struggle to think of scriptures that point us to that.

And so we're going to have a little look at some places in the Old Testament which help us see resurrection. And these Old Testament passages, let me suggest to you they're like signs.

So in just over a month, some of us are heading to Eastbourne to Bible by the beach. And if on my car journey down to Eastbourne, I see the sign that says Eastbourne and we decide to stop the car and we get out there and think we've arrived, we'd be wrong, wouldn't we?

We see the sign that says Eastbourne and we follow it until we get to the destination, which is Eastbourne. If we stop at the sign, we're going to be disappointed.

[2:47] And so I think we'll work on that basis as we go through the Old Testament passages. There's lots we could look at. We're only going to look at a few. But know that they are just that.

They are signs. And we're going to get to the New Testament and make sure we see the empty tomb as we did this morning. See the place where those angels says he is not here.

He has risen. Listen, we're going to begin at the beginning. Genesis 1. Genesis 1.

Chapter 1. Verse 1 and 2. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Now the earth was formless and empty. Darkness was over the surface of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering. A question you can call out.

[3:50] Could be chaos. What is there at the beginning? Formless. Empty. Empty.

Darkness. Waters. Yeah. The Spirit of God is there. Yeah. There's not really much.

There's basically nothing. God plus nothing. Hopefully we know this. What does God do on each day of creation?

What does he do on each day of creation? Bethany's got her hand up. We're going to ask Bethany. Very polite. Created something new each day. Absolutely. Yeah.

How did he create? He spoke. Yes. And when he spoke, what happened? It happens. Yeah.

[4:49] God speaks and life comes out of nothing. That's how the Bible begins. Genesis 2 verse 7.

Genesis 2 verse 7. It reads this. Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. And the man became a living being.

What are we told God breathes there? What does God breathe? The breath of life. Yeah. And so hopefully this is an easy answer.

What does this mean for the man? It means he lives. Life. God breathes the breath of life into Adam.

And life happens. Life out of nothing. Including human life. I'm going to quote to you from somewhere else in the Bible.

[5:59] But it's not there. So I won't quote to you from there. In the garden. There were two trees.

Have a look at verse 9. Chapter 2 verse 9. The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground. Trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.

In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Two trees which are singled out in this passage.

The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And go later down into the passage. Verse 16. We read this.

And the Lord God commanded the man. You were free to eat from any tree in the garden. But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For when you eat from it you will certainly die.

[7:07] There is one tree. God says you must not eat from it. But they could eat from the tree of life. God created their lives and gave them access to life.

To the tree of life. In this good world that he created. I'm guessing most if not all of us will know the story.

We know how they heard the serpent's voice. They doubted that God's command was good for them. And they listened to the serpent and they ate of that tree that they were told not to eat of. And so go to Genesis chapter 3 verse 22 to 23. And we read this. And the Lord God said the man has now become like one of us.

Knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life. And eat and live forever. So the Lord God banished him from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

[8:20] After he drove the man out he placed on the east side of the garden of Eden cherubim. And a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

So those two trees are now banished. They cannot no longer have access to that tree of life. And the next chapter of the Bible is recorded the first death.

First murder. Death enters the world. But you read through the rest of the scriptures and you see that God is still very much involved in the world that he's created.

God at the beginning he created life out of nothing. Life out of emptiness. But could he bring new life to the dead?

We know from Genesis. We know about the flood don't we? God preserved life in this judgment on the world.

[9:33] Judgment of death for the world. We're not going to go there though. We're going to pick up the story at Genesis 12.

We won't actually read from Genesis 12. But when you get to Genesis 12. Who does God choose? You can name him.

Abraham. Or Abram as he starts off as. Abraham. Abraham. And there's extraordinary promises of blessing made to this man Abraham.

And promises of land and promises of people. Descendants. God is going to make Abraham into a very great nation. But there was a big problem for Abraham and his wife Sarah.

Does anyone remember what that problem is? Age. Yeah. Yeah. They couldn't have children. Yeah. They couldn't have children.

[10:39] Romans 4. Paul sort of commentates on this really. He says. Against all hope. Abraham in hope believed. And so became the father of many nations.

Just as it had been said to him. So shall your offspring be. Then verse 19. Without weakening in his faith. He faced the fact that his body was as good as dead.

Since he was about 100 years old. And that Sarah's womb was also dead. According to Paul. What was Abraham's body as good as?

Dead. And what was Sarah's womb? Dead. Dead. Humanly speaking. It was utterly impossible. For them to have any hope of children.

Let alone Abraham being the father of many nations. But Abraham believed God's promises still. It was credited to him as righteousness we read.

[11:49] He believed in the life giving gods. Who can create life out of nothing. Even life to what is dead.

Sarah's womb. Dead. No life. But still. He believed God could create life out of nothing. And that's not the only occasion where we see someone's womb closed.

Barren. Remember Hannah from our studies in Samuel. After the Lord had blessed her with a son, Samuel.

As she wrote this song. And she was convinced that the Lord, he brings death and he also can make alive. He brings down to the grave and raises up.

Seeing that theme of life. Of resurrection. Life to the dead. Turn with me to Genesis chapter 22.

[13:00] Genesis chapter 22. And then we'll have a little discussion in groups. I'm going to read Genesis chapter 22 even. From verse 1 to 12.

Some time later, God tested Abraham. He said to him, Abraham.

Here I am, he replied. Then God said, take your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the region of Moriah.

Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain that I will show you. Early the next morning, Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.

[14:05] He said to his servants, stay here with me while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you. Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed his son Isaac on it.

And he, and placed it on his son Isaac. And he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father, Abraham, father.

Yes, my son. Abraham replied, the fire and wood are here, Isaac said. But where is the lamb for the burnt offering? Abraham answered, God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son. And the two of them went on together. When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it.

He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar on top of the woods. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, Abraham, Abraham.

[15:11] Here I am, he replied. Do not lay a hand on the boy, he said. Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.

Two questions in groups for the next four or five minutes. What does Abraham believe about God and how does this passage have resurrection hope?

Have a think in your groups. If you're, just to say, if you're sort of visiting with us this evening, we'd love to have you with us.

Do feel free to just sit and listen if that's something that you're uncomfortable with. But, yeah, also do feel free to speak up as much as you like.

So do turn in your groups. I know there's people sitting in odd places. So form a group at the back or come and join another one. You're free in Christ.

[16:22] Because as I said, those Old Testament passages, they're like signposts. If we stopped at them and stayed there, we'd be a bit disappointed because we need to come to the New Testament and see someone who has actually been resurrected from the dead to live forever.

Resurrection is in the pages of the Old Testament, but they're signs. And we arrive at the New Testament and when we see the Lord Jesus, and there's a few times when he raises the dead, isn't there?

Think of the raising of the widow of Nain's son. That's one example. And he raises Lazarus from the dead.

And it's John 11. I'd love us to just turn to briefly. John 11, 23 to 26.

John 11, 23 to 26.

[17:48] Actually, I'm going to read from verse 21. Lord, Martha said to Jesus, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give whatever you ask.

And so Jesus said to her, your brother will rise again. Martha answered, I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

That resurrection hope that Job had. Martha had it too. I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

And then Jesus said to her, verse 25, I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even though they die. And whoever lives by believing in me will never die.

Do you believe this? Where does Jesus say resurrection is? In him.

[18:49] In him. Yeah. I am the resurrection and the life. Believe in me. And even though you die, you will live. It's found in him.

Jesus is God. And we've seen in the pages of the Old Testament, a God who could create life out of nothing. A God who acted on the third day in many times to bring life.

And he proves that he can do that here in this chapter. Down in verse 43. When he had said this, Jesus called out in a loud voice, Lazarus, come out.

And the dead man came out. His hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen and a cloth around his face. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. He calls out the team and the dead are raised to life.

But he goes even further than that. Jesus said, I am the resurrection of the life.

[20:05] But then Jesus went to die, didn't he, on the cross. We thought about it this morning. Think about it again. If Jesus stayed dead, then how could we follow him?

How could we follow someone who says, I'm the resurrection and the life, and yet he stays dead? It would be a bit like following a politician who makes so many promises, and yet many of them tend to leave us a bit disappointed.

And perhaps we were looking forward to another election this year, voting someone in, starting again. But they will let us down at some point. But Jesus is not like that.

Jesus really is exactly who he says he is. He says, I'm the resurrection and the life, and he proved that on the third day. On that first resurrection Sunday, we saw it this morning.

He is not here. He has risen, just as he said he was. And many, many people were witnesses to the resurrected Jesus. And all that the Old Testament scriptures pointed towards, in terms of resurrection, it's now a reality in Christ.

[21:28] We saw two trees in the garden. In the Bible, we also see two heads.

I'm not going to turn us to those passages. You could look them up at some other point. We see two heads at Adam and Christ. All of us, naturally, we're born into Adam.

And because of that, we sin, we face death. But the Bible, the New Testament particularly, shows us the Lord Jesus, the resurrection and the life.

In him, we can find new resurrection life. And Christ leads us to that. I wanted to sort of come to land a little bit in John chapter 20.

John chapter 20. I'm actually going to start in John 19, verse 41.

[22:46] At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden. And in the garden, a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid.

Because it was the Jewish day of preparation, and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. So the tomb Jesus was in was a garden.

In Genesis, we saw, we see Adam and Eve given life in a garden.

Bear that in mind. Now move to chapter 20, verse 11. Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying.

As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been. One at the head and the other at the foot.

[23:47] They asked a woman, why are you crying? They have taken my Lord away, she said. And I don't know where they have put him. At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

He asked a woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for? Thinking he was the gardener, she said, Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where have you put him, and I will get

him.

And Jesus said to her, Mary. She turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic, Rabboni, which means teacher. And Jesus said, do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God. And Mary Magdalene went to the disciples of the news.

I have seen the Lord. And she told them that he had said these things to her. In John 20, remember, we're in a garden.

[24:49] We're outside the team. That's where Mary was standing. We find a man and woman in the garden. And I don't think that's an accident in John's writing.

I think John wants us to know that standing there with Mary, who thinks at first this is the gardener, standing there with Mary is that the new man, the second Adam, bringing new life, bringing new creation.

You've even got down in verse 12, two angels in white where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. When Adam and Eve were banished from that garden in Genesis, you've got angels there, cherubim, standing God saying, do not enter.

Now we've got angels here speaking to Mary and showing concern. Verse 13, women, why are you crying? The first garden, there was surely so much joy, which was turned to grief because sin and death had arrived.

But now we see a reversal of that here in this passage. Verse 15, it says, woman, why are you crying? Who is it you're looking for?

[26:28] Thinking he was the gardener, she said, sir, if you've carried him away, tell me where you've put him and I will get him. And then Jesus said to her, Mary, and no longer is there grief in the garden, there is joy.

She turned towards him and cried out, an hour make Rabboni, holds on to Jesus. Because now is standing a man in the garden who has dealt with our sin, who turns our mourning and our weeping into rejoicing.

In Genesis 3, verse 3, the woman told the serpent that they must not touch the tree.

Now in verse 17, Jesus said to Mary, do not hold on to me, do not touch me. Not because she couldn't necessarily, but Jesus is saying, don't touch, don't hold on to me, I'm not disappearing. Life is here now. If you touch that tree in the garden, yeah, death comes into the world, but now I am here and I am bringing new life into this world.

[27:54] And unlike in the garden where Satan said, you will be like God, Jesus says, he is God. And he says that there is now hope that God can be known as your God, as your Father.

God is bringing life. In death, in Jesus' death, he brings life, he brings resurrection power.

And no longer are we banished from life anymore. But we now know life again. Here's a little table, which hopefully helps us see that a little bit more.

Comparison. And God's people now are new creations, new creations in the Lord Jesus.

We're once dead in sin and now alive in Christ. And as some of us were thinking this morning, we're seated in the heavenly realms, part of something new, new creation.

[29:08] And we're looking forward to something better. And I'll end with these verses at the end of Revelation. Revelation 22. Revelation 22, verse 1 to 5.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life as clear as crystal flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city.

On each side of the river stood the tree of life. It's there. Bearing 12 crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city and His servants will serve Him. They will see His face and His name will be on their foreheads.

There will be no more night for they will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun for the Lord God will give them light and they will reign forever and ever.

[30:24] That's our hope. That's the new creation which Christian people can look forward to because of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

And resurrection is something that's not just randomly there at the end of the Gospels. It's there throughout the Bible. Hopefully we've seen it that a bit more this evening.

What a wonderful salvation plan God was working for this world. And what a wonderful hope we have of living in a new, restored, Eden, but better, all made possible through Jesus Christ, our living hope.

we're going to stand one more time and sing praises to Jesus Christ, the resurrected Son of God. Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne while Heaven's eternal anthem drowns all music but its own.

Awake, my soul, and sing of Him who died to be your Saviour and you'll match this King through all eternity. Let's stand and sing and then I'll pray a closing prayer after this.