

The Glory of Christ (6): In His Resurrection

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[0:00] Now, the history of the world is divided into two sections by the Gregorian calendar, B.C. And AD, before Christ, and Anno Domini, after Christ, after the Lord.

It's measured from the estimated date of the birth of Christ. Now, of course, secularists try to get around the mention of Christ by talking of about the common era and before the common era. I wonder, though, whether we should measure things not from the date of Christ's birth, but from the date of His resurrection.

Because the resurrection of our Lord is the single most important event in the history of the universe. Never has the glory of Christ been more powerfully witnessed than in the resurrection of Christ, and never has there been a more world-changing reality than what happened on that third day.

Over these last few weeks in the summer, we've been exploring together various features of the supreme glory of our Lord. We've seen His glory as the perfect representative of God, in the mysterious constitution of His person, in His condescension, in His love, and His glory in the Old Testament. This evening, I want us to enjoy the glory of Christ in His resurrection. And I want to do this under four headings. The glory of Christ in power, in vindication, in salvation, and in hope.

I don't think any of us fully appreciate just how world-changing the resurrection is, and how if we were to fully grasp it, it would change our lives also.

[2:11] First of all then, the glory of Christ in power. The glory of Christ in power. We're so used to talking about the resurrection of Christ that the reality of what happened on that third day passes us by. We've taken the power involved in the resurrection for granted. During His public ministry, Jesus performed many miracles. He changed water into wine at the marriage in Cana of Galilee.

He made lepers clean. He exorcised demons from the demented. He calmed a storm. He stilled the sea. He fed 5,000 with just five loaves and two fish. He even raised people from the dead.

The last of these miracles deserves a mention. He brought dead people back to life. However, there is a difference between His miracles of bringing people back to life and the miracle of His resurrection. Those people He brought back to life died again.

One of them was Jesus' friend, Lazarus. Jesus called him out of the tomb. But many years later, under circumstances unknown to us, Lazarus died again. However, Jesus was raised to everlasting life.

He did not die again. The glory of His resurrection consisted in this. He was raised to a new form of life, never again to experience death. This is what separates the resurrection of Jesus in the third day from all the other miracles. Think of the power involved in Jesus' resurrection.

[3:58] For us, death is the greatest of all enemies. We can send human beings into orbit around our planet. We can fuel entire nations by cracking the power of the atom. But we cannot bring the dead back to life.

This has always and will always prove impossible for us as a human race. We can make dead, but we cannot make alive.

The incidences of Jesus' resurrection are not in themselves as powerful as the resurrection itself. So, angels rolled the stone away from the entrance to the tomb. It was a heavy stone. It was cemented into the doorway, but its removal is something human beings could have done, given enough time and the right equipment.

But the resurrection of Jesus itself, but there's the real power. Added to this are the resurrection appearances of Jesus. Jesus. Nobody actually witnessed the resurrection event itself, but they did see the risen Jesus.

Jesus' new abilities go beyond our understanding and ability. There was continuity in his risen body. He was able to speak and touch and eat.

[5 : 22] But there was also discontinuity in that he was able to walk through solid walls. He was able to appear and disappear at will. He was seen by hundreds of people.

The glory of Christ and the power of his resurrection belongs not just to the resurrection event itself, but also to what followed. He was raised in power and he was raised to power.

It's a far greater power than that which served to create the universe in the first place. In power, God created.

In even greater power, God raised his son from the dead. Now, there are times in our lives, perhaps this evening's one of those times, where we feel powerless.

Powerless against the circumstances we face. Powerless against our own poor health. Powerless in the face of governments and of nations. Powerless against our own poor health.

[6 : 28] But what are these powers compared to the greatest of all powers? The power of God in the resurrection of Christ. There are drops of water in a bucket.

There are grains of sand on the seashore. If ever we should doubt the power of God, remember the power involved in the resurrection of Christ.

Christ. And rest in that sovereign power. Praising God for the glory of Christ's resurrection strength.

The glory of Christ in power. Second, the glory of Christ in vindication. Vindication. Some years ago, the great John Stott wrote a book called Christ the Controversialist.

Christ the Controversialist. The life of Jesus was marked by controversy. Wherever he went, he was followed by his enemies, intent on making him stumble.

[7 : 30] But try as hard as they could, they didn't succeed. Even when they thought they'd caught him in the horns of a dilemma, he was always able to turn the tables on them.

They hated him. Because he claimed to be the Messiah. The Son of God. They knew exactly what he was claiming to be when he said to them, before Abraham was, I am.

That's why they tried to stone him. He was making himself equal with God. From a very early stage in his ministry, his enemies were resolved to kill him.

And finally, they hatched a plan and bribed Judas, Jesus' disciple, who betrayed his master. Having been arrested, Jesus' enemies drew up false accusations against him.

Then when Pilate found him innocent, they flew into a rage and threatened rebellion, forcing Pilate's hand until finally, Pilate ordered that Jesus be crucified.

[8 : 33] When he was on the cross, they hurled insults at him. If you really are the Son of God, come down now from the cross, they cried. Even when Jesus had risen from the dead, his enemies couldn't accept it, and they made up a story saying that his disciples had stolen his body.

These religious zealots, they believed in a Messiah who would be strong, gather to himself a powerful religious army, and defeat the Romans.

They could not accept a Messiah who was gentle, humble, and more interested in the outcasts of society than in them. But of course, from a worldly perspective, the death of Christ on the cross was the ultimate sign of his defeat.

Jesus was just the latest in a long line of failed messiahs. Even today, there are many religions, like Islam, for example, who refuse to believe that Jesus died on the cross.

Come back to that later in August. For them, as for the Jews in the first century, such humiliation was way beneath what was expected of God's anointed Messiah.

[9 : 55] Our modern atheists also complain, how can God kill his own son? The identity of Jesus, you see, was in the balance. Was he really the son of God he claimed to be?

Or was he merely deluded a nothing but another false Messiah? And then in Romans chapter 1, verse 4, we read these words, that he was declared to be the son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.

The resurrection of our Lord was his vindication. No matter what anyone may say about him, God has declared Jesus to be his son by raising him from the dead.

You see, the resurrection put the identity of Jesus as the son of God beyond all question. There can be no more doubt who Jesus Christ is. Everything he said and did is vindicated.

It's all true. I find this an altogether remarkable thing, that on the third day, Jesus wrested religion from the hands of the religious.

[11 : 18] The name of Jesus was vindicated forever, such that the apostle Paul could later say, at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, the Pharisees included, that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

All those who have miscalled him, all those who have mistreated him, on that day will be forced through gritted teeth to confess, I was wrong about Jesus and that wrongness has cost me dearly.

Let's be under no illusion. Jesus Christ is who he says he is. He is the Messiah, the Son of God. He's the Lord. Everything he said is absolutely true. To him has been given all power and authority in heaven and upon earth.

All sovereignty and all dominion belongs to him. And he calls us today to repent and to believe in him. The life of Jesus was marked by controversy, but there is no controversy now.

God does not call us into dialogue with other religions. He calls us to call other religions to repentance and faith because God has raised his Son from the dead and vindicated his name forever.

[12 : 42] The glory of Christ in vindication. Third, the glory of Christ in salvation. Salvation. According to the Bible, Jesus died on the cross on account of our sin.

Although he had done nothing wrong, he never sinned, he was bidding the punishment and paying the price of our sins on the cross. We know this.

In the Old Testament, it's written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. On the cross, Jesus was cursed on account of us.

Jesus said of the cross, As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

On the cross, Jesus was bidding the punishment we deserved. Dying to death, we should have died. He was offering himself up as the sacrifice for our sin.

[13 : 49] Well, the question is, how do we know that God was satisfied with that sacrifice? How do we know that sacrifice was enough?

In the Old Testament, innocent lambs and bulls were sacrificed to take away the sins of the people. It wasn't just one lamb, not just one bull.

There were thousands of them over hundreds of years. This signified that the sacrifices of these lambs and bulls was never enough.

Enough of them could never be given to take away the sins of the people. Their sacrifice of these animals was insufficient for full atonement.

Is that what it is for Jesus also? Having given himself on the cross, was that enough to satisfy the justice of God?

[14 : 48] Did he bear, as Ann was challenging us this morning in the children's talk, did he bear all the punishment of our sin or only some of it, such that some of it is left remaining and must be paid for in another way?

Did he pay the full ransom price of our sin or only part of it, such that some of it is left to be paid by our good works and our religious performance?

Let me quote the New England preacher, Jonathan Edwards. I was at Twin Lakes a few years ago in the deep south, and they were talking about Jonathan Edwards as this great American theologian.

But of course, he wasn't American. He was English because at the time, America was a colony of Great Britain. They didn't like it when I pointed that out.

Anyway, Jonathan Edwards, if Christ were not risen, it would be evidence that God was not yet satisfied for our sins.

[16 : 00] Now, the resurrection is God declaring His satisfaction. He thereby declared it was enough. Edwards there is saying, the glory of Christ in salvation is that His resurrection forever demonstrates that His offering on the cross for our sin has been accepted.

There is nothing nothing left to pay that He's taken all the punishment of our sin. God is infinitely satisfied with the sacrifice Jesus has offered for our sin and has proved His satisfaction by raising Him from the dead.

There is nothing left for us to pay because Jesus, as Ann told us this morning, has paid it all. The empty tomb is proof to anyone who puts their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ that they'll be forgiven of all their sin and guilt.

The resurrection is the demonstration of our salvation. We might ask ourselves the question, how do I know that I have been forgiven by God? We answer, because Jesus rose from the dead on the third day.

We might ask the question, how do I know that God does not hold my sins against me? We answer, because the tomb of Jesus lies empty.

[17 : 35] My sins are gone, Jesus lives, and my sins are dead. The resurrection of Jesus is the demonstration that God accepted His sacrifice in full.

When someone buys a house, they usually take a loan called a mortgage to pay it off over a number of years. When that loan has been paid off in full, the bank from which the loan was taken sends the title deeds of the house to the buyer, signifying that they now own the house in full and there is nothing left to pay.

The resurrection of Jesus is God's title deed, proving that He has fully paid the debt of our sin to God.

In Romans 4.25 we read these words, He was crucified for our transgressions and raised for our justification. What all the blood of bulls and goats and lambs could not achieve, Jesus did by the sacrifice of Himself for our sin.

No wonder John the Baptist pointed to him and said, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. If you're anything like me, and I hope you're not, but if you're anything like me, long after you have confessed a particular sin to God and repented of it, you still hold that particular sin against yourself.

[19:11] you still feel guilty for what you did. You still feel guilty for what you said. God has forgiven us, we know that, but we find it so difficult to forgive ourselves.

How could I have done that? How could I have said that? If we're looking for evidence of our forgiveness, let's not look inside at our peace of conscience and judge our forgiveness by how we feel.

Let's look back rather on an empty tomb and on a risen Lord. The Jesus who sacrificed for all our sin was gladly accepted by his Father.

If you're struggling to forgive yourself a particular sin, think of the resurrection of Jesus. Focus on that, not on how you feel. Glory of Christ and salvation.

Well, fourth and finally, the glory of Christ in hope. Glory of Christ in hope. Just before I move on to this final point, let me suggest that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is not so much a Christian doctrine as it is a historical fact.

[20:33] One Christian apologist, William Lane Craig, has written about it. the resurrection of Jesus is the best attested fact in all history. We have more evidence for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead than that Julius Caesar ever stood upon the shores of England.

We might talk of Christ and his love as a doctrine, but the resurrection of Christ from the dead is of a different order of verifiable certainty, and that's why in times of doubt, it's good for us to go back to the empty tomb, because it's here in the garden Christianity stands or falls.

And because the resurrection is a fact, all we believe as Christians is true. The resurrection calls us to look back on our sins and know with certainty they've been forgiven.

They'll never be held against us. Jesus has paid the price in full. But the resurrection also calls us to look forward with great hope.

The apostle Peter in 1 Peter 1 verse 3, one of the greatest verses in the Bible, he exclaims, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[21:49] According to his great mercy he has begotten us again. He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

A living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The great Puritan John Owen wrote a famous book called The Death of Death in the Death of Christ which some of you may have read.

If he was still alive perhaps we could ask him to write a sequel called The Life of Life in the Life of Christ. Through the resurrection of our Lord we have been born again to a living hope.

The apostle Paul talks much about this in 1 Corinthians 15. For Paul as for us Christ has been raised as the first fruits of all who will believe in him.

Because Jesus was raised from the dead we can be assured that we who have placed our faith and trust in him we shall also be raised from the dead.

[22:57] and we shall be raised not like Lazarus to die again but we shall be raised like Jesus to new eternal life glorified in the presence of the Father in the new heavens and the new earth.

It shall not be a new life limited by the restrictions of our present human experience. The risen Christ had not yet ascended and therefore had not been exalted.

Shall our bodies be like his resurrection body? Shall they be able to do things which at present are impossible? We do not know.

One day we'll find out but as far as we're concerned that's not the most important thing. There shall be no more pain, no more tears, no more cancer, no more death, no more hunger, no more thirst, no more illness.

There shall be only the beauty and contentment of Christ's eternal presence with us. Psalm 16, which we'll sing in a wee while, has become somewhat of a favorite, especially to our young people, when it's sung to the tune, Golden Hill.

[24 : 12] And verse 11 is particularly precious to us. you have made known to me the path of life divine. Bliss shall I know at your right hand, joy from your face will shine.

It's even more powerful than the English standard version, our version here. In your presence is fullness of joy at your right hand are pleasures evermore.

because of the resurrection of our Lord, this is our sure and certain future. This is fullness of joy, pleasures evermore, and that because we shall be in his presence and at his right hand.

Which brings us back to what I said at the beginning of this point. The resurrection of Jesus is not a doctrine. But a fact. The fact of Jesus' resurrection is what establishes the certainty of our hope.

It is said that a man can live for 40 days without food and he can live for four days without water. He can live for four minutes without oxygen. He can live only four seconds without hope.

[25 : 31] But what hope we have as Christians. We have faith in a God who is more than powerful enough to raise the dead to a new glorified life. A Christ whose name as Lord has been decisively vindicated.

A God who is fully satisfied with the sacrifice his Son has made for us. A Christ in whose glorious presence we shall be forevermore. as we read through the sermons preached by the apostles in the book of Acts we cannot help but be struck by how other conclusions inevitably focus upon and climax with the fact of the resurrection of Jesus.

We may fairly say that the resurrection is not just the heart of the gospel it is the power of the gospel. The resurrection of our Lord is the supreme glory of Christ demonstrated in the facts of history and the beauty of Christian hope.

The single most important event in the history of the universe. History can be divided into two sections pre-resurrection post-resurrection.

Given the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus there is no excuse for anyone to believe in him. He was dead. But he now lives in the glory of his father.

[27 : 07] You don't believe it? Investigate it for yourselves. And you too will come to the inevitable conclusion millions and millions of other Christians have.

Christ is risen. He is risen in glory and he dwells in glory. All that's left is for each of us here to believe and trust in him.

To reach out these weak sinful mortal frail hands to him. and to say glorious Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon me a sinner.

Amen.