

Easter 2019

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[0 : 00] For some, perhaps, this is a very easy question to answer, and for others, maybe not! And if you're new to church or religion or Christianity, there's a lot for you to think! about today, and that's awesome. That is great, and I'm excited about that. Maybe you're here, you don't even believe that Christ was raised from the dead. There's people here from all different areas, so welcome, one and all this morning. Regardless of who you are and how often you've attended church, if you consider yourself a church person or not, the fact of the matter is Easter Sunday is the day that followers of Christ, that is Christians, dedicate to remembering and celebrating the resurrection of the man Jesus from the dead some 2,000 years ago. He died on a wooden cross alongside of criminals, was placed in a tomb on what we call Good Friday, and then three days later was raised from the dead. There's a chronology right there. Who is the resurrected Christ? That's our big question this morning. Typically, Easter Sunday has one reading from one of the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John in the Bible, and these accounts give us details about Christ's resurrected body, who he appeared to, and what he was like between his resurrection and his ascension.

But today, I want to do something a little bit different. Instead, I want our reference point to be the book of Revelation instead of the gospels. And if we see this text, I think, in Revelation for what it is, we're reminded that the resurrection is not simply of historical value, which I think can be easy to fall into that understanding.

The portrayal of Christ in Revelation chapter 1 is just as true then, when it was written, as it is now. Revealing what we read in the text is not over and done with, is it?

But it's alive and it's active for us today, and it affects us today. The Bible's significance then, now, and for eternity is equally as important. And so this is our pursuit today.

Who is the resurrected Christ? That is our question from Revelation 1, 12 to 18. And we're going to look at this three-part answer that this text in the Bible gives us.

[2 : 25] His appearance, his deity in life, and his authority. And you may be thinking, well, we see these three elements other places in Scripture, and we do, right?

But they're somewhat scattered. John's vision of Jesus in Revelation 1 puts them in one spot. And doing so, I think, creates one of the most powerful pieces of Scripture detailing key facts and defining characteristics of the risen Christ.

It is Christ who is speaking to John here. That's who's speaking in this text. Announcing and revealing himself in a way that no other part of Scripture does. Who better to answer our big question today than Christ himself?

That's what we're going to see. Hope you got those three written down. If not, we're going to see them again. Here's some goals for today. I like to have goals when I teach. I like to have goals when I learn.

If not, I get really lost. Number one, I want us to be able to answer our big question. If we can't answer the question we set out to answer, then we've failed, and I have failed.

[3 : 29] I want us to answer our big question, who is the resurrected Christ? Number two, and this is so important, I want us to worship and celebrate him. I want us to consider what the text reveals, how what the text reveals about the resurrected Christ might impact your life and change the way you live.

And then finally, and this is a goal for those who may not consider themselves church people. Maybe you're here at your first service ever, and that's super exciting, and I'm honored that that's the case.

Or maybe you don't often explore religious things and you try to stay away. Someone asked you to come or you found us online or heard about us, something like that. Well, it's good news because the Bible's teaching aren't just for those who are viewed as religious or see themselves as religious. God perfectly crafted his word, the Bible, to be read, understood, and applied by all people. All people. So I think that, I know that you will find today helpful, and I hope you'll consider, and that's number four, truly consider the truths that are being said because these truths are life-changing, right?

Not just in a knowledge, wisdom way, certainly in that way, but also in a real-life way. So let's read our passage together this morning.

[4 : 52] This is Revelation 1, 12 through 18. Turn in your Bible. You can use a smartphone if you want. If you have neither of those, look on with a neighbor, please. Can we please stand as we read God's word?

If you're able to, please stand with me. Thank you. Verse 12. Then I turned to see the voice, this is John speaking, that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and a golden sash around his chest.

The hairs of his head were white like wool, like snow. His eyes were like flames of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.

In his right hand he held seven stars. From his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun, shining in full strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead, but he laid his right hand on me, saying, Fear not.

I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys to death and Hades. This is the word of the Lord.

[6 : 12] Please be seated. Pray with me, church. God, this morning we want to hear from you. God, and we want your word, the Bible, the word of God, we want that truth to penetrate our hearts, Lord, and I want it to penetrate mine, too.

Lord, and I want it to penetrate the hearts of everyone in this room, God, because your word is good. God, and we celebrate today the truth in your word about your son Jesus raising from the grave.

God, may we honor you in our thoughts, our actions, and our minds. Lord, for your glory and your great name. Amen. Amen. So here is our quest to answer this question, who is the resurrected Christ?

And we're going to see it using Revelation 1, John's vision of Jesus, and we're going to see it in his appearance, his deity in life, and his authority.

So here's number one. Jot this down. Appearance. Before we hear Jesus speak in verse 17, John gives a lengthy description of what he sees.

[7 : 19] He sees one like the Son of Man, the name Jesus often used for himself in Scripture. Here's how John describes him starting midway through verse 13. This is what we just read.

We're going to read this part again. He was clothed with a long robe and a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow.

His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze. You can see these descriptors are bolded, a little more bold white there as you can see that. Refined in a furnace, and his voice is like the roar of many waters.

In his right hand he held the seven stars. From his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun, shining in full strength. Pretty crazy.

So what's going on here, right? Flaming eyes, a sword in the mouth. The descriptions John uses seem confusing, but they're actually really similar to language from the Old Testament from others who had seen visions of God, like John is.

[8 : 28] The sight of Christ stretched the boundaries of John's language, one author says. He attempted to describe Jesus using similes drawn from previous manifestations of God to others.

This is similar to descriptions from the book of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Isaiah, amongst others. John doesn't only portray the elements which could describe his actual body and form, but, sorry, such as his beaming face, mighty voice, white hair, and robe that he wore, perhaps those are Christ's actual form, but also he says things that speak of his person and character, like the two-edged sword coming from his mouth, his polished bronze feet, and his holding seven stars in his hand.

Many of these things mentioned in the list are significant and carry very deep meaning, although we will only view them as a whole today and not dive into great detail.

So by combining together the physical and non-physical aspects of the risen Christ's appearance into one description, John has attempted to convey the majesty, the glory, the power, and the splendor of the resurrected Christ.

He presents the whole picture of Jesus, and he wanted for his fellow believers in Christ to see this. That means us, too. But why? John wrote the book of Revelation to encourage the church of his day.

[10:00] One author wrote this, John lives in a pagan world that is persecuting and martyring Christians. Put yourself in John's shoes. This vision is an affirmation that God's in control, isn't it?

And that this Christ reigns. He is Lord over all. This language John uses speaks of a magnificent risen Christ who could only be in control of the universe and nothing less.

The description helped the recipients of Revelation to walk in light of who Christ is and his fullness, encompassing their current trials. Imagine if you were the folks reading that book then, what would this appearance mean to you?

We, like them, must not be deceived, though. There is absolutely nothing more supreme than there is in Christ. But there's something I'm guilty of, and maybe you are, too.

When I think about Christ, I have this picture from the first century of this man, Jesus, sitting in a boat, right, talking to the disciples or walking with the crowds and teaching and preaching.

[11:15] Or I have this image of this Galilean man, and this carpenter sitting under a tree, teaching or sitting with kids and playing. And that image is right, right?

It's correct. That is Jesus. That was him. However, I'm sorry, further, the Bible says that the Christ who walked the streets of Jerusalem, he was an ordinary man.

He probably wouldn't have caught your eye. And that image of him is true. But that is not Christ as John is conveying him, is it?

That's not the same picture we see. It's the same man, but it's not the same picture. This is not what John was trying to share to those like us who would read his books in future generations of Christians.

The resurrected Christ today in his appearance isn't the man from the picture books wearing sandals and a robe. He is anything but ordinary. He is extraordinary.

[12:16] John's language reveals this and so does his reaction to the appearance. What is it like to interact with the risen and heavenly and glorified Lord?

Look at John. John sees Christ in his full heavenly glory and he falls to the ground, our verse says, verse 17, as if dead.

Other stories in the Bible we can read show similar reactions from folks who encounter Christ in his glory. Simply put, we can't bear to stand to the majestic weight of an interaction with our God.

He's almighty. He's holy, far beyond measure. And so why is that important for us, especially on Easter? What's the relevance for today?

I think that we should never see Christ for less than he is because when we see Christ for less than he is, I think we can worship Christ for less than he is, can't we?

[13:25] When we picture him for less than he is, our worship will probably follow suit. There's a great chance, I can confidently say, that most of us will never see a physical manifestation of Christ on earth like John did, but our reaction needs to be the same.

And I'm not suggesting that after reading this, you just kind of fall to the floor and fall on your knees as though dead. That's not what I'm saying.

I'm not saying physically falling in fear. I'm suggesting that reading this verse should cause our hearts to take a posture of humility and reverence. But do they when we consider the resurrected Christ?

A realization of his control over all things, his sovereignty over our life situations, his majesty is hardly able to be put into words. He's not someone that should receive our half-hearted worship when it's convenient for us, is he?

When it's convenient for us to give it to him when we have time. He's holy. He is worthy. And we are utterly unworthy, aren't we?

[14:38] Take some time to reflect on these things later on, or periodically. What's your response to John's description of the appearance of Christ?

And does it yield a posture of worship and awe in your heart? And how about your lifestyle? What does this appearance of Christ yield in your heart?

Does it bring about worship through submission to God's sovereign control over all things? I wonder if our lives would look different if we envisioned this holy, majestic, worthy Jesus each morning when we started our day.

Right? I wonder if our life would look different. We dare not give anything less than the full and utter and true and heartfelt worship that Christ deserves. So we've started to answer our big question today.

Who's the resurrected Christ? In his appearance, he's the almighty one who's majestic and beautiful and powerful beyond measure, beyond words, and whose glory causes men to bow in reverent fear and worship in body, mind, and heart.

[15:47] Friends, his appearance demands our worship. It begs for our adoration and it better influence the way that we live. It ought to.

Who is the resurrected Christ? Let's move on to our second point as Jesus reveals something about his deity and life in the next section. After he fell down, John says in verse 17, look back at the text with me.

He, Jesus, laid his right hand on me, saying, Fear not. I am the first and the last. A similar phrase to first and the last is used just a few verses back in Revelation chapter 1, 8.

We see the phrase alpha and omega. Maybe we're a little bit more familiar with that. And by calling himself this, Christ affirms two things and these things are so important. Number one, he affirms his deity as God.

The alpha and omega is the name used of God in the Old Testament. You don't have to turn there, but Isaiah 44, 6 reads this way. Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of heaven.

[16:59] I am the first and the last, or the alpha and omega. Besides me, there is no God. And Jesus identifies himself as God, the God of the Old Testament, now in human form, real flesh and blood like you and I.

This is the message Jesus shares with those around him while on the earth. The idea of Jesus being God is crucial. This is so important. And it is one of the primary reasons or the accusations against Christ that was used to put him on the cross.

Number two, he affirms his intentions equal God's intentions. We see Jesus express this on many occasions.

One example is John 6, 38. He says, For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. His intention is to do the Father's will.

And what is that will? We have to ask that question. Back to alpha and omega. Alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. God is the first, the alpha, the creator and the beginning of all things.

[18:23] And the last is the omega, the one to whom all things were created to glorify. And he will usher in the new heaven and new earth, the beginning of the end.

Jesus' plan are to usher in a new heaven and a new earth as is the will and intention of his Father. This plan is intrinsic to God. Friends, allow me to remind you of this plan or perhaps to make you aware of it for the first time.

There is a holy God Let me fix this real quick. there is a holy God whose plan is to make the whole earth his dwelling place.

This is exciting. It's okay if you get excited when you hear this. This is a good plan. It's not my plan. There is a holy God whose plan is to make the whole earth his dwelling place.

and the whole earth might display his glory and all people and created things would worship him and live in perfect relationship to him.

[19:37] That is and always has been God's plan. But there is a major barrier in the way of this plan and when I say barrier I don't mean barrier like a short picket fence.

I mean barrier like trying to live without water or oxygen. Right? seemingly impossible. That's the barrier that's in the way of God's plan. The barrier is me.

It is us. It is our sin. So since the very first sin was committed by Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden that barrier was set in place.

But God did not abandon his plan. Remember his plan is intrinsic to who he is. God was set on fixing that problem to redeem his plan to make the whole earth his dwelling place. To reconcile humanity back into perfect relationship with him. Often the Christian gospel as we're discussing now is termed good news and it is good news.

[20 : 50] There's a way to get rid of this barrier of sin. to pay the consequence. A price must be paid. Just as there is a consequence for breaking any rule or law if you were pulled over by the police for speeding you would receive a speeding ticket.

That is a consequence and you must pay your fine as part of your consequence and when you do in essence your rule breaking is forgiven right because you've paid the price for your rule breaking and that's great.

You've paid the debt you owe. There's a consequence also for sinning against the holy God but the debt owed for sinning against the holy God is far greater than any speeding ticket.

it's greater than money it's greater than status it's greater than being a good immoral person that can't pay your debt it's greater than anything else we could dream up good enough to pay for our sin.

There's a way to resolve this there is a way to move forward to remove the barrier the Bible says the wages of sin is death.

[22 : 11] It's a scary word isn't it? The Bible says death is the way to remove the barrier God demands death to satisfy his just wrath against our sin to gain or to receive his forgiveness.

The book of Hebrews in our Bible chapter 9 verse 22 says this without the shedding of blood there's no forgiveness of sin. Without death and bloodshed to pay this debt there is no reconciling there is no fixing the plan and it's not any bloodshed.

You see the sacrifices of the Old Testament the lambs weren't meant to be placed forever they were placeholders. it's not any bloodshed but the blood from a perfect sacrifice a holy God his wrath is only satisfied in that way and it's let's not be confused it's his wrath against us because we're the lawbreakers.

It's not his wrath against everybody else but me it's his wrath against us. sacrifice that has not transgressed laws what God's laws what God's demands and there's only one sacrifice to meet that standard friends it's Jesus Christ.

Sin ruined God's plan but God had a remedy. here it is the man Jesus who was fully God and fully man was sent to earth as the only acceptable sacrifice for the sin of mankind.

[24 : 01] God sent his son to complete his plan and on the cross Jesus bore a punishment didn't he? It was our debt we owed it we committed the penalty and consequence that we should have paid the consequence for my sin should have been my blood shed yet he shed his blood for us he died and he was placed in the grave and there was a stone rolled over friends that Christ the one of all power and majesty and beauty that we just talked about earlier the one without sin was in the grave is that how the story ends though?

no we have a few no's story doesn't end on a good Friday does it? Christ wasn't finished on Friday he was raised I said he was raised yeah the bible says he was buried and he was raised again on the third day according to the scriptures the resurrection is what Easter Sunday is about it's about getting closure from the death of Christ on Friday the resurrection is critical to God's plan let's go back to our text in verse 18 Jesus is alive Jesus calls himself the living one he said I died and behold I am alive forevermore the key here is alive forevermore

Jesus was raised to new life and it wasn't a continuation of his own life right? Lazarus in the bible was raised after he died to continue his old life Jesus was raised to new life entirely new life forevermore he would never die again to complete the redemption of mankind God's plan Christ being resurrected has given you and I a chance at life also remember the omega the ushering of the new heaven and earth that place is filled with God's people and only God's people who have begun new life in him through his death Christ took our penalty he took my death and through his resurrection he gave me life he gave you life that is why the resurrection is so important that is why we should be moved to celebrate it with such joy who is the resurrected

Christ? the resurrected Christ is God he is the first the last the alpha and the omega and because of this his intentions are to carry out the great plan of his father of saving mankind in his death he took our punishment and in his resurrection he has become alive forevermore and has given me has given us a chance at new life as well how does he accomplish this?

how does his resurrection take our death? the answer is through his authority and that's our third point today verse 18 the third and final section Christ says I am alive forevermore and I have the keys to death and Hades I love this phrase this is probably the number one reason I picked this passage today what does this mean?

[28 : 06] we just sang about it too what does this mean? so we know that we as humans are physical and spiritual right?

we have a physical body and we have a non-physical body right? our soul our spirit in regards to death and Hades then one might say that death claims the body in Hades or commonly said hell the soul of men often in scripture the entrance to death in Hades is described as being controlled by gates Jesus Jesus references this once when speaking to Peter on one occasion when speaking to Peter in Matthew 16 18 I'll read it for us I Jesus also say to you that you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overpower it simple enough to understand right?

the gates keys denote the power to lock and unlock and open and shut makes sense Matthew 16 19 the next verse Jesus gives Peter authority to carry out discipline he gives him the keys that which is permissible and not permissible for God's church to do Peter has authority in his ministering so keys represent authority the keys of death in Hades as referenced in verse 18 unlock the gates to death in Hades so that those who would have been previously bound and held secure by death in Hades are now set free to eternal life one theologian writes friends you and I either are or were part of that group the group bound by death and hell bound and secure by that grip though our body doesn't appear to be dead y'all look beautiful this morning no one's body here appears to be dead however what about our souls apostle Paul says our souls are dead

Ephesians 2 1 you were dead in your trespasses and sins you were dead in your trespasses and sins Ephesians 2 this is without hope utterly and totally true and utter despair no glimmer of life this is everyone in humanity without exception living a good life doesn't make you immune from death being a religious person doesn't either neither does coming from a Christian home there's no free pass from death you know the outside we look great but inside we're dead God's word says all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God so friends apart from

Christ we are dead and we are bound for hell and that's upsetting I hope it's upsetting we're bound for eternal separation from God which is the opposite of his great plan isn't it I think if we don't properly view the deadness of our souls we won't also properly view the glory of Christ's authority and the splendor of his resurrection we'll be too close together we need to see the gap for what it is why would new life cause us to bat an eye if we don't see ourselves for who we really are it probably wouldn't but we are dead without a chance but the resurrection gives us the one chance that we have one chance there is no hope at escaping death apart from the risen

[32 : 39] Christ thankfully Paul continues on in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 5 he says he made us alive though we were dead how do we have a chance at life in the midst of being dead because Christ has the authority not because we have the authority not because we have the means and I was thinking it's hard for us to really grasp this because we can't really feel or see or sense or get a good understanding of what the deadness of our soul means but it's dead and I was thinking how powerful is our Jesus that he can bring us from death to life yeah how powerful is the resurrected

Christ it's powerful he's glorious death is something that every man and woman fears possibly the scariest and the most uncertain and most painful aspect of all of human life is death but the resurrected Christ do you know that he defeated it when he rose from the grave and he didn't just defeat it like push it to the side a little bit he didn't just defeat it like a sports team defeats a sports team but they have to play again in a few weeks on their turf did he he conquered it he left death in the grave no one else can do that Jesus left death in his grave death did not keep

Jesus in the grave he's not there anymore you can go to the grave you can go to the grave and he's not there the stone is rolled away and Jesus has the keys he has the authority over death to release you and I from his grasp to unlock the gates and bring us into a new life with him and through him alone there is no one greater or with more power or authority than the risen king Jesus who has victory over death itself friends praise God in closing I'll say this verse 17 Jesus came up to John who was overcome with fear he said he's as if he were dead this is so great and with his right hand the hand of authority by which he reigns as king over all in which he reigns over all the hand of authority in a powerful but loving in a caring voice he tenderly says fear not and he reassures

John like no one else can by saying this know who the resurrected Christ is here's his answer to our question I am in my appearance the holy and majestic one who is mighty and sovereign over all things who longs for your awe and your worship and your heart and mind and actions I am in my deity and life the alpha and the omega the one who has created all things who was sent to destroy the barrier in the way of God's plan to inhabit the earth and live with man in perfect relationship I have paid the price for you your sin that you might enter into life forevermore as I had I am in my authority he who has conquered death and hell by resurrecting from the grave I have resurrected your soul from death that you may live that you may have life praise be to God

Shoreline may we worship and celebrate the resurrected Christ and may these truths impact and change the way that we live that our lives might honor him in all things both now and forever more amen pray with me our God we are so thankful that you have rise from the grave God that you have become victorious over the death which either once held us God or is still holding us down in death and Hades God we praise your holy name this morning God it is only out of your goodness that you have created a plan to dwell with us for eternity

[38 : 35] God we simply could not thank you enough God we simply could never love you enough or worship you enough God but cause our hearts to be soft to give our greatest effort towards that God may your name be praised Lord may your name be praised Amen