

# The Empty Tomb and Why It Matters

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[ 0 : 00 ] So what do you guys think? Is summer here for good? What's going on? Hopefully. All right. Please turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew 28.

If you are new or visiting or if you've been away for a while and you've come back, Irene, that's meant for you, and Goni, we've been studying the life of Christ now for two years. And today, I don't know whether to be sad or joyful, but today's kind of our last sermon on this life of Christ series.

Joyful, yeah. I'm sad because it's ending. But I've been preaching now for 15 years, and I can say that this has been my most favorite series that I've ever preached on because of the radical teaching it has had on my heart and the impact of just being immersed and able to read other men's observations, just putting this whole life of Jesus together.

And as I've done so, he's even become more compelling to me. And I pray that it has been the same for you. When we began this series, I had two goals in mind.

[ 1 : 25 ] The first goal is that I desired for you to be able to see the Gospels, the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as a trustworthy source for the historicity, the truth about Jesus.

We have a world, and if you guys would have noticed, around Easter time, if you were in any of the grocery stores or drug stores and you looked at the magazine, there's always someone's got an article on Jesus, and they always want to enter these new ideas.

And they believe they're being more academically truthful by not referring to the Gospels. But anybody who studies history or does investigations, primary sources are the most important source that you want.

You want to hear from the people who were there with Jesus. Amen? Those are the ones that have got the freshest memories, who saw what was going on. And not only that, because of what they saw, what they witnessed, they're now compelled to act differently.

And if we were going to Acts, we're not going to go to Acts right now, but if we were to go to Acts, you would see that how these apostles almost did a 180 change from men that scattered when Jesus was arrested to going before the great high priests and all the religious authorities and being bold and declaring the truth of Jesus Christ.

[ 3 : 01 ] You know, a lot of experts want to discount the recreation of life outside of the Gospels. And the biggest part is they have to accept that Jesus was more than a carpenter or a rabbi or a prophet or a philosopher or even a good moral teacher.

As you guys heard over these last two years, Jesus was exceptionally clear with who he is. He is indeed the Son of God.

And according to John 14, he clearly said, I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through me.

And what he's talking about is an intimate relationship with him. For even in John 14, he says, Listen, guys, and this is to his 11 apostles who are shaken because Jesus announced he's going to leave them.

If you know me, you know my Father. So that's how powerful that testimony is. That was the first goal.

[ 4 : 15 ] And only you can answer whether that goal was accomplished if you've been able to see the Gospels in a new light, giving you a deeper understanding to Jesus Christ. The second goal that I had is that you would see Jesus as being human.

And I know that sounds kind of odd, but did you, my goal was that you would appreciate the humanity of Jesus. In modern-day evangelicalism, we often hear about the deity of Jesus, right?

We read about how he's the Son of God. But there's not a lot of writings, and it's kind of interesting when you look over the history, say, from the 1900s to now. In the 1900s, a lot of people wrote about the humanity and who he was within the culture.

But a lot of cults sprung up out of that, claiming, looking at just the humanity of Jesus and ignoring the deity of Jesus. And as we've seen, Christ is quite clear that he is the Son of God.

But he went forth both as 100% man and 100% God. It wasn't as if it was a 50-50 split. He was all man and all God. How that works out, we really don't know.

[ 5 : 26 ] And it doesn't really matter. Because his life testifies to both. But the strength of this is that when we pray, we know that we have a God who knows what it is to be human intimately.

Not just from the point of creation, but he was one of us. He breathed the air. He walked in the same dust. He experienced the same pain. The writer of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 14, 4-15, sorry.

For it says, For we do not have a high priest who was unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Do you understand that? He was like us. He walked us. He endured the outward temptations that we had, have. Even on the cross, under extreme torture and pain, we see Jesus asking his Father to forgive those for they do not know what they do.

We see Jesus reaching out to the thief and say, Today you will be with me in paradise. And probably one of the most humanly, most human thing that a son can do is he looks down and he asks the apostle John to take care of his mother.

[ 6 : 58 ] You know, just that extreme humanity. Because 4-16 says, Because of Jesus' humanity, it says, Let us then, with confidence, draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

When we pray to our Father, we have Jesus Christ as our mediator in heaven. I only have several words to say to that.

Hallelujah, what a Savior. So the question that has been before me this week is, How do we wrap up this series? What I decided that I'd like to do this morning is I want to explain to you, and when I say you, I mean one who is a Christian, one who has testified that you have received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, that you have put your faith in him.

If you are one of those people, I want to demonstrate to you this morning that your faith in Jesus Christ is actually a part of history. That your faith is based on a historical event that occurred over 2,000 years ago.

And what I mean is that your faith is not simply a spiritual event, but that your faith is actually a historical event.

[ 8 : 38 ] That it's rooted in this real world. Many people believe that our foundation of our faith as Christians is that we need to suspend our intellect, that do not pursue logic.

If you just believe, if you can believe enough, if you talk to a Mormon, a Mormon is going to ask you to base your faith in how much or how strong you believe something to be true.

That is not Christianity. Christianity is calling you to put your faith in a real person who lived a real life in a real part of this world, who lived in a real culture, had real feelings, real friends, real family, and a real death.

But an unreal resurrection, right? You see, biblical faith is a faith in Jesus Christ. That is a historical event.

And the reason that you and I know of this event is that there were hundreds of people who witnessed this event, testified to this event, and ultimately their lives were changed by what they saw.

[ 10 : 07 ] And they went on to tell others and others and others till finally one day it showed up in Squamish. I don't know how many years ago or what's, Squamish has been around what, 1400s?

1200s? No, just kidding. Right? But ever since that time, someone who had heard the gospel ultimately saw the events of Jesus Christ and continued to pass this down.

To put it another way, the reason you believe is that there were hundreds of people who witnessed the risen Christ, who were eyewitnesses to this event, and they testified to this truth with their mouth and deeds.

So the question I have is, how important is the resurrection and the testimony that followed? Allow me to read Paul's words to us from 1 Corinthians 15, verses 17 and 19.

Paul was arguing, he says, if Christ had not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins.

[ 11 : 21 ] Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people to be pitied.

What Paul is communicating, no matter the life that Jesus lived, no matter the teachings that he taught for those years on earth, had he not risen from the dead, it would make no difference.

The strength almost is believing in the resurrected Christ than the Christ who existed before. What Paul is saying, that if Jesus Christ had not raised from the dead, no matter all the incredible things he did on this earth, but had he not risen, our faith is in vain, and we are to be pitied.

Now let me ask you a question. If you are one who testifies to being a believer in Jesus Christ, and when you have the opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus, what do you tell others about Jesus? I'm sure you will communicate to someone who does not know Jesus, hey, Jesus loves you. You might communicate that Jesus loves you so much that he died for you.

[ 12 : 59 ] You might even communicate that Jesus loves you, Jesus died for you, and he died so that you might have forgiveness of sins. Or you could take out a page of Rick Warren's book and just simply state that you have a purpose, that as God's created being, you have a purpose in this life, and let's find that purpose in Jesus Christ for you.

But what's interesting is when we go back to the early church, that is not how they presented Jesus Christ. I'm going to read you some passages from Acts about how the first apostles preached Jesus.

Acts 2.32. They're explaining Jesus, and Peter says, this Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses.

Testifying to the resurrection, Acts 3.15 says, and you killed the author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.

Acts 5.30.32 says, the God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at the right hand as leader and savior to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

[ 14 : 28 ] And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him. Acts 10.39-41.

As for the word he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all. You yourselves know what happened throughout all of Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.

He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. Verse 39. And we are witnesses of all that he did, both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree. But God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all people, but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

Every single instance when they are proclaiming the truth of Jesus Christ, they are testifying. We saw. We saw.

[ 15 : 55 ] We saw what happened. We know the truth. And finally, just from 1 Corinthians 15, Paul tells us, For I delivered to you as first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with scriptures.

And he appeared to Cephas, which is Peter, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

So what he's saying is, when I'm telling you about Jesus, there's people who can corroborate this, who know this truth. Then he appeared to James, who was the brother of Jesus, then to all the apostles, last of all, as to one ultimately born, he also appeared to me.

You see, there's always been an emphasis on the witnessing part of their testimonies, an emphasis that Jesus died, he rose again, and people saw him.

So this morning, I want to look at some of the appearances of Jesus. We're going to look at them briefly, but the question I want to look at is, or not the question, I want to show you that if there was a way that the world could negate Jesus, is you have to destroy the testimony, the eyewitnesses account.

[17:30] And I'm going to go over some of the accounts the world has offered to discredit the eyewitness testimony, and then I'm going to give you some, let's call it, apologetic proofs that help us understand and trust what the Bible says even more when we think deeper about it and how it attests so wonderfully and so perfectly that Jesus did rise from the dead.

You with me on that? All right, dear Lord, Heavenly Father, we just give you praise for who you are in this word. I pray that you give my words clarity. I pray that this message would strengthen the faith of those who know you.

And I pray that this would challenge those who might not know you, who might have questions whether you are indeed the Son of God and whether the eyewitness testimonies are reliable.

So I ask you these things, may you challenge them and bring them to an understanding of your truth and ultimately faith in you. In your name, amen. So on the day of Jesus Christ's resurrection, if you look in your Bibles, Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is found in the very last chapter of every one and there's also a recording of the witnesses.

John is a little bit different. John 20 records the resurrection and the testimony of those who saw him, but there's almost this addendum with John 21. And as we've known through this series, the Gospel of John was written several decades after the other three Gospels.

[19:10] And what's interesting, it's almost John is answering the question to the saints of what happened to Peter. Because if you remember Peter, Peter claimed to be the strongest denier or the strongest believer that he would never deny.

No matter what you guys, those other apostles might do, Peter arrogantly say, I would never fall away, right? And he did. He denied Christ three different times.

So it's like John adds John chapter 21 and you'll read it. It's a great chapter, of course. But it's Jesus Christ asking Peter to shepherd his flock.

And that's the context where he says, Peter, do you love me? Peter, do you love me? Peter, do you love me? But we're not going to get into that. So the five appearances happened at the last chapter of the Synoptic.

So the first person that Jesus Christ made an appearance to was to Mary Magdalene. And we find this in Mark 16 and John 20. And what's interesting is that Mary didn't recognize Jesus as first.

[20:11] And I'll just read this to you in verse 11 of John 11. It says, But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. And as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had lain.

One at the head and one at the feet. And they said to her, Woman, woman, why are you weeping? She said to them, They have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have laid him.

Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing. But she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?

Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away. And Jesus said to her, Mary.

She turned and said to him in Aramaic, Rabboni, which means teacher. Jesus said to her, Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father, but go to my brothers and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.

[21:21] Mary Magdalene went and announced to his disciples, I have seen the Lord and that he had said these things to her. So that's the first witness that we have.

Matthew 28, the passage that Dave wrote to us, there's also another section where these women are coming and it records to us that one of the women was Mary, the mother of James, another woman of Siloam and it's kind of very similar.

There's an angel sitting on the rock. David read that passage to us and it says that when Jesus greeted them, they came and worshipped at his feet.

The third instance we see is on Matthew 16 and also included in Luke 24. It's a story of two disciples and they're going to this city called Emmaus, which is about seven miles outside of Jerusalem and Jesus started walking with them and it was started to explain to them what the Old Testament demonstrated about Jesus and they didn't pick up who he was and I'm going to answer that question one of the reasons why because Scripture talks about hidden from their eyes, not revealing, but I'm going to assert another idea of why I don't believe they recognized him and I'm going to get to that in a couple of minutes.

But right at the very end of their conversation, Jesus kind of gave the impression he's going on and then they figured out who it was. So there's that eyewitness testimony. In Luke 24, 33, Luke alludes to us that Jesus appeared to Simon Peter and Mark 16, Luke 24 and John 20, all show that Jesus appeared to all the apostles except for Thomas.

[ 23 : 11 ] So on that day that Jesus Christ resurrected, we have these five appearances of Jesus that believers testify to. Outside of the first day, there was seven more times.

The first time is when Jesus appeared to the disciples with Thomas. Remember Thomas? We give him this name, Doubting Thomas. It's actually, I believe that's the wrong moniker for Thomas. I believe when you look at the text in when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and he was going to go see Lazarus and Jesus was kind of hiding, not hiding, but he was in Perea which was outside of the influence of the high priest and they said they were going to kill him and Jesus said, well, we're going to go.

And Thomas makes this say, let us go and die also. I think that demonstrated a man who was unwillingly willing to follow Jesus anywhere and when all of a sudden with the death of Jesus Christ, he's distraught, he's shattered.

He says, unless I see the wounds and the marks in his hands, I will believe and he believes. Amen. Then there's another story. He appears to seven disciples besides the Sea of Galilee.

[ 24 : 26 ] Talks about in the text, there's 500 disciples gathered in Galilee and then we heard from Paul that he appeared to James, that is the half-brother of Jesus. He appeared to Paul and finally to when he ascended, right?

The church saw Jesus Christ ascend to heaven and the point that I want to make is God doesn't simply call us to believe in him, like I said, through the strength of our faith.

He calls us to believe an event that was seen by hundreds and that's why there's so little written after Jesus resurrected. There's just a chapter in each gospel because the most important thing was to create these eyewitnesses.

So like I said before, if you wanted to undermine the Christian faith, what would be the primary method that you would need to use?

You would need to discredit hundreds of eyewitness testimonies. You with me on that? Hundreds of eyewitness testimonies. During that day when you heard you could go talk to someone who saw and they would tell you.

[ 25 : 47 ] Now it's not just the four gospels. These men are also representing others who are telling them that they saw. These are people whose lives had changed.

These people died to share this truth. In fact, like I said, throughout Acts, the apostles make this one of the focal points. But here's the thing.

And this morning I want to show you. I want to give you five arguments that have been raised that Jesus didn't in fact rise from the tomb.

You ready? Here's the first one. The women went to the wrong tomb. That's one of the arguments that has been offered through testimony that obviously the women were married or associated with men who don't ask for directions, didn't give it to the women, and they didn't know what tomb to go to.

All right? Maybe it was too dark. Maybe they just made a mistake. It was a similar looking tomb and they got confused.

[ 26 : 58 ] Well, the truth of the matter is, as we see in the pages of Scripture, the tomb was actually well-known. Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy man. In fact, no one had laid before in that tomb and it's actually just outside where Jesus died on the cross.

You can't miss it. The Scripture is a quote that they knew that Joseph took the body and where they placed it. Otherwise, if they wanted to truly discredit the story of the resurrection, they would have just gone to the right tomb and guess what they would have found?

No body, right? So that argument doesn't really hold up well. The second argument that's been offered through history is that Joseph of Arimathea actually took the body.

So he actually buried it. He went in after, got rid of the guards somehow, took the body and then removed it. The thing is, there's absolutely nothing in history that would tell us that this indeed happened.

And in fact, it belies the argument that if Joseph had taken the body, why didn't the Roman guards report that? Right? We read in Matthew 28, they were lying that the disciples took the body.

[ 28 : 13 ] Why? Because the body was really gone. So their argument didn't really stand up. The third argument that they use is that Jesus really didn't die on the cross.

He was there on the cross, but somehow when they took his body and they put him in that tomb, the cool, fresh air of that wonderful tomb somehow revived him.

And if you read the scriptures, it says that Joseph of Marimathea had over 100 pounds of spice. So Jesus would have been wrapped in 100 pounds of spice around him.

Say nothing by the fact that he was beaten, bloodied, and bruised on the cross. That all of a sudden, I just needed a good nap to get over that. Right? But that was one of the lies that critics forwarded during the day.

Now, if you were here during Easter sermon, you would know that nobody survives the cross.

Rome made sure of that. That's why when it came time to take Jesus off the cross, they did not break his legs because he was dead.

[ 29 : 23 ] They pierced his side. The two thieves on the cross, they were still living. So they broke their legs so they could no longer hold up their weight and would actually asphyxiate.

So there was no way any Roman soldier would have allowed anybody to live coming down from that cross, otherwise his life would be forfeited.

One guy talking about this, imagine if that were true, okay? So Jesus arrives, he's in the tomb, he revives, and he kind of manages to get out of all the linens and he somehow has the strength to roll away the tomb and he'd get out.

He's still got blood and everything. He would have scared Mary Magdalene, right? Like all of a sudden this bloody figure all weak and battered and bruised would have walked out of the tomb. It would have been horrendous, a horrendous scene.

Even though he would have been alive, he would have almost been pitied because they would have had to care for him and bring him more healing. So that argument falls apart on many different levels.

[ 30 : 42 ] The fourth reason is that, and this is the oldest attempt to explain the empty tomb, that the disciples stole his body. And as we saw in the text that Dave read that if the guards were indeed sleeping, how do they know it was the disciples who did it, right?

And if they admitted that they slept on duty, their lives would be forfeit for a Roman soldier to fall asleep on duty is death. And perhaps the funniest one that I read is that Jesus was so beaten, so bad, so bruised, that his body decomposed in those 36 hours and he turned to gas.

So that is one of the brilliant arguments that are put forth by critics.

But this is the reason we have multiple testimony of the empty tomb. I want you to share with you today how compelling eyewitness testimony is. The first reason why we can trust the eyewitness testimony that we read in the story of the Gospels is because there's actually multiple testimonies of the empty tomb.

If you would have noticed, the text of the Gospels, the story of Jesus Christ rising again in the witnesses, it's actually the most difficult text to harmonize because there's so much going on in that text.

[ 32 : 15 ] You read, there's Mary Magdalene, there's Mary, there's the mother of James, and there's Salome, there's all these different terms, there's this, there's sometimes one of the texts is just other women, you're like, which women are there?

But the way the Hebrews record it, they're just going event to event to event. They're not writing in order to give a historical account of exactly what happens here, but they're all kind of adding their piece to the story.

And there's seeming discrepancies within that testimony, but that doesn't diminish the testimony. If everyone said the exact same thing, what would that point to?

Sorry? Collusion. It would point to the believers got together, they formed one story, and they had everybody else said that same story.

You with me on that? So by the varying accounts that come through, it actually points that the multiple testimonies of the empty tomb give strength to the argument that Jesus Christ did indeed rise again.

[ 33 : 19 ] And eyewitness testimony is great, but it's not perfect. Josh is a police officer. He can tell you when he was, I didn't mean to give that away, Josh, sorry. He's not investigating anybody here.

But when I was in university, first year university, there was a gang guy, I was with some friends in a car, and we drove into the wrong neighborhood. This is when I lived in L.A., and a gang thought we were another bad gang, and they pulled out guns and started chasing us.

And we were driving backwards down this road, and a guy had a gun, and he's racing at us, and we finally get into traffic, and get over there. So we drive to the police station, and the police officer is asking us, what shirt did he wear?

What color shirt? We couldn't agree. Five months, we couldn't agree on the shirt. How tall he was. Well, he was more than five foot, but shorter than six.

But he was asking us for precise things. But we were all like, that doesn't matter. There was a guy running after us with a gun. We all saw it. You with me on this? We were all positive of that event, but one of the guys could identify saying he was wearing shorts.

[ 34 : 30 ] Another guy was able to pick up his sneakers. And like, did you see? I didn't recognize this. I was just focused on the gun. Right? So, eyewitness testimony, sometimes there's variances within what we each believe.

But the truth of the matter is, this demonstrates it did not evolve from a single source. The second reason we can believe the gospel is this. This is the truth that the early church taught this.

The men who taught the gospel of Jesus Christ were all eyewitnesses to the event of Jesus. See, this is the argument that gets put out. We know these men died for their faith.

History tells us all the apostles except for one, John, dialed in exile on the Isle of Patmos. But there's a lot of people today who die for Islam.

And people always say, is this not the same thing? And it's not the same thing. And I'll tell you why. Because they were eyewitnesses to the event they know they're dying for their real truth.

[ 35 : 38 ] If Jesus really was still in the grave, they hid the body, they'd be dying for a lie. You with me on that one? They would knowingly be dying for a lie, for an untruth.

And that's why people who die from other religions, they really believe it's truth, but it's based on their belief system. It's not based on whether true knowledge.

You with me on this? So that's a discrepancy that people sometimes try to argue. But the early church taught that this was indeed truth. It was not a lie or a carefully planned hoax.

If it was, every single witness to Jesus Christ who died for that truth were indeed psychopaths. their preaching is consistent that it always assumed the empty tomb.

To disprove it, all it would have taken for the Jewish leaders is to show them the body of Jesus that was still in the tomb and nobody would have believed these men.

[ 36 : 47 ] But Jesus was out of the tomb and there was no body for them to show. So that's the second reason. And listen, the third reason, and I mean no insult to the better gender, but women were actually witnesses to the empty tomb.

You might be insulted. What? Women? And the reason is in a Jewish court system, women were not allowed to be witnesses for any type of trial. So if you were putting a story, we're going to get together and we're going to write the story of Jesus.

We're going to get people to believe in our far-fetched religious idea. Who should we start with?

Well, you're going to try to start with prominent people. Right?

Who were the people that, oh, they'll never disbelieve them. But the Gospels are actually telling us what actually happened. And it was women that were the first to go there.

And here's the other thing. The women went in the loving manner that they were to make sure that Jesus was properly cared for in his death. They were not expecting him to actually have rising again.

[ 37 : 58 ] Right? They actually went there thinking that he was indeed dead. They went to care for their body. But by allowing, by the testimony that we have in scriptures that points out that the women were the first ones, the women were the first ones to worship Jesus.

They clung to him. Actually works against what critics would usually do. Or if someone were to make up a story, you try to come up with the most credible people, not the ones who are not allowed to bear testimony.

You with me on that one? And what's interesting is apart from being witnesses, they play very little in the rest of the resurrection tradition. And the other fact that we know the fourth reason is Dave stated that the Jews knew right from the very beginning in Matthew 28, 11, 15 tells us that they were trying for ways to excuse the resurrection.

Right? If it weren't empty from the beginning, they wouldn't have needed to pay off soldiers. They wouldn't need to have come up with these complex ideas. The tradition of Jesus resurrecting was not a fabrication devised by men centuries later.

It actually demonstrates that the tradition existed right from the very beginning of the Christian faith. Amen? Right from the start.

[ 39 : 27 ] And the last point I want to share is, and there's many others, but these I find are the five most compelling and the fifth reason that we can believe and trust the testimony that is offered to us is the tomb was a well-known tomb.

We knew. It tells us in scriptures exactly what the tomb is, where it was. It was brand new. He made it, put it in there. Joseph of Arimathea was actually a part of the Sanhedrin, a well-known man.

You see, the tradition of the empty tomb centers on a specific known, a specific tomb known to both believers and unbelievers, which means it would have been investigated.

They knew. That was the Joseph of Arimathea's tomb. All he had to do is disprove it, is go to that tomb. So this isn't something that happened later, years later, to try to, hey, what are some ways we can discredit?

All the testimony demonstrates that this truth existed right from the very beginning. You with me on that?

[ 40 : 35 ] Okay. So now I just want to, I want to switch channels just very briefly. And I want to give you five, four major reasons why Jesus had to rise from the dead.

And this is the part that makes the biggest difference to our faith. One, it confirmed the identity of Jesus Christ. What it meant is Jesus Christ is who he said that he is. Jesus' resurrection confirmed his claims of being the Son of God and the Messiah.

It demonstrated that Jesus was who he claimed to be and that his teachings were true. Number two, it demonstrated that Jesus had victory over death.

If I am going to teach you that you and I, when we die, there is going to be a resurrection, right? The Bible teaches that there is going to be a resurrection of all who lived and we will have to give an account to God.

If Jesus doesn't resurrect, what are the chances of us resurrecting? What? Zero, right? There's no chance. But by Jesus Christ himself resurrecting, demonstrated his victory over death, it demonstrates that death is not the end and that eternal life is a fact for all who believe in him.

[ 42 : 02 ] In fact, eternal life is a fact for all who don't believe who he is. But one is in a place of blessing, the other is in a place of suffering.

This provides our hope for Christians that death is not the final destination that we too have in eternal life. The third goal that Jesus or I don't even know what the word is, the third accomplishment of Jesus' resurrection, it demonstrated that he atoned for our sins.

That Jesus' death and resurrection made it possible for forgiveness of sins and ultimately our reconciliation with God. If God just died, how could we ever have peace with him?

And fourth, it demonstrated Jesus' authority and power. Jesus' resurrection established his authority and power over death, sin, and evil.

You see, these are all the major events accomplished by Jesus because of the resurrection.

resurrection. So this morning, in order to close out this sermon and by extension this series, I want to read you a quote by an author who's commenting on everything that is before us.

[ 43 : 26 ] And he simply says, throughout the existence of the church, countless numbers of people have come to believe in the risen Christ. If asked, some could give a reasoned defense of this hope within them.

They could argue both historically and philosophically in defense of their faith. Others, with a similar conviction, could not. They might simply respond as the hymn writer says, you ask me how I know he lives?

He lives within my heart. Such a witness should not be dismissed out of hand. Multitudes of people from every continent and nation, from all races throughout the centuries have joined together and confess, Jesus Christ is risen from the dead because we have these witnesses who said so.

Such a witness is subjective to be sure, but it is a witness that is available to all. The experience of the living Christ is open to all who would seek for themselves and taste and see, as the psalmist calls us to in Psalm 34.

If, as Christians maintain, Jesus has risen from the dead and sits at the right hand of God, then such a personal and immediate experience of the risen Christ should be available.

[ 44 : 57 ] The overpowering nature of this witness can be seen throughout history as men, women, and children have made the supreme witness in martyrdom.

They, and we today, know that our Redeemer lives. We have experienced His presence, His power, and His love.

Amen? Let's pray. Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, we just thank you for the witness that you provide for us, that you appeared to all manners of women and men, hundreds of people in those last 40 days that you were on earth, testifying that you were indeed the Son of God.

I can't believe how amazing it would have been for the apostles to kind of being disoriented and not really knowing what was or what had happened, could now claim with much vigor and excitement that you indeed lived.

None of them said, I knew it. Most, I'm sure, would have asked Jesus to forgive them for what little faith they showed, even the faith of face of him, explaining to them over and over that he was indeed going to rise again from the tomb on the third day.

[ 46 : 41 ] What patience, grace, and mercy you displayed to your apostles and in the same way you do to us, even in the midst of our trials of doubting you, God.

I'm sure everyone has a story when they began to doubt or their faith began to waver and they questioned whether the testimony really is sure.

The fact of the matter is people by accepting you have given up all to follow you in the same way the disciples did. We are no different in that way.

And yet, you call us to believe the testimony and some of us we need to investigate these things. Some of us we need to know these answers.

I know when I was young I needed to know and understand that the testimony was sure that you indeed did rise again if I was going to continue in my faith.

[ 47 : 55 ] Father, we come before you on this Sunday also to celebrate your birth and your death and your coming again through this table.

people. We're going to celebrate communion on this Sunday to commemorate what you did for us. That you did indeed die on a cross and did indeed rise again.

We do not celebrate Passover but we celebrate your victory over death, your victory over Satan, your victory over lies, your victory over shame, you made a way for us to be reconciled with our heavenly father.

We come to you today acting in obedience to take this bread and this juice to celebrate that victory.

So this morning let it be very much a part of our worship. Let it be a part, very much a part of our faith. That we do indeed trust the witnesses who most gave up their lives so we could know the truth.

[ 49 : 22 ] We ask you these things in your most holy and blessed name. Amen. Amen.