

# **Truth for Today**

*The Bible teaching radio programme*

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## **Easter Broadcasts: Easter Message (2000)**

A tremendous battle had taken place during the war. When a period of calm returned again, the army regrouped and losses were calculated. Peter's family at home received the sad news: 'missing in action, presumed dead'. The longer the parents waited, the more sure they were that the news was true and they assumed the worst. However, one day there was a knock on the door and when the door was opened, Peter stood there, as large as life. What rejoicing, what jubilation! The information had been incorrect and Peter was very much alive.

You can well imagine the tremendous sense of deep joy for the disciples when they fully realised that their Lord was very much alive. His was not a case of one missing. They knew for a fact that He had died and was buried. Now, He was truly and remarkably alive!

### **The reality of His death.**

Now for there to be a resurrection there had to be a death. This was no mistake, no accident in the circumstances. The Lord Jesus had died. It was a fact. Let us remind ourselves of some of those desperate circumstances of the suffering of the Lord, particularly and prophetically, from the Old Testament.

Psalms 69 tells us of the sufferings the Lord felt. 'Save me, O God; for the waters are come unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me', verses 1-2. 'They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty,' verse 4. 'Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none', verse 20.

Psalms 22 speaks of Him as forsaken of God. 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? why art Thou so far from helping me?', verse 1. How much the Lord Jesus felt abandonment. The psalmist goes on in verse 2, 'I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not'. Listen again, 'They look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture', verses 17-18.

Isaiah 50:6, 'I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting'.

Isaiah 53:3-6 tell us of what He did for us, 'He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him: He was despised, and we esteemed Him not... But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed'.

Then, again in Psalm 22:16, 'They pierced My hands and My feet'.

When the apostle Matthew writes his gospel, having referred to all these indignities they heaped upon the Lord, he says in stark language: 'They crucified Him'. 27:35. The prophecies of the Old Testament are all fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ. The purpose of all His suffering was to take the punishment for our sin against God so that, as we trust in His work on the cross, we may have salvation.

His death was certain. All the gospel writers use the same words when recording the death of the Lord Jesus: 'He gave up the ghost'. There was no doubt. The soldiers, who came to break the legs of those crucified, to hasten the death, did not break His legs. They knew He was dead. The centurion, in charge of the crucifixion, knew it. Pilate knew it. Joseph of Arimathea knew it. Nicodemus knew it. They hastily, yet carefully, buried Him in a new sepulchre. There was no doubt at all; He had died.

When we come to Ephesians 5:2 we read that 'Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us'. The force of those words 'given Himself' brings in the sense of giving up Himself. It was not just that He allowed those evil men to take Him and crucify Him, He deliberately gave Himself up to God for the work of the cross, to save us all from God's wrath and punishment against sin. What a Saviour!

## The truth of His resurrection

The death of the Lord Jesus left the disciples completely demoralised. Not one of them could envisage what was to come although the Lord Jesus had spoken to them specifically of following events. Only the chief priests and Pharisees had any concerns. They came to Pilate and said, 'Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again', Matthew 27:63, and they ask for close security to be applied to the tomb. Pilate told them, 'Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can', verse 65. How anxious they were. They sealed the stone and set a watch. Did they believe that man could arrange these things? It reminds me of Psalm 2 where kings and rulers plot to break away from the overseeing power of Jehovah. Verse 4 tells us: 'He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision'. How terrible for the rejecter of the authority of God to learn, first, that nothing can prevent the power of God completing His own work and then to hear the laugh of the derision of God against every rejecter.

In spite of the sealing of the tomb and the setting of a guard, Christ arose! Just think of those disciples, cowering in fear behind the locked doors of the upper room on that first day of the week. They had heard stories from the women who had gone to the tomb, that He was alive. They had heard from Peter that he had met Jesus. Then two disciples, who had walked to Emmaus, came back with the good news that He was alive. How could they believe it all? Lastly, though the doors were locked, 'Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you', Luke 24:36. At their fear and wonder 'He shewed them His hands and His feet', verse 40. The tremendous evidence of the resurrection changed all that had recently taken place as we learn that the Saviour, 'though He was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God', 2 Corinthians 13:4. He is alive, hallelujah!

*Up from the grave He arose,  
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes;  
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,  
And He lives forever with His saints to reign!  
He arose! He arose!  
Hallelujah! Christ arose!*

Here is a fact for which we can be thankful. The record of the book of 'The Acts' claims on many occasions that 'God hath raised Him from the dead', e.g. 3:15. This is the work of God! The work of the cross was fully done. The Saviour had fully atoned for sin. In complete acceptance of that work, God raised Him from the dead! This was God's reply and man could not prevent it. In that first sermon of chapter 2:24, Peter says of the Lord Jesus, 'whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it'. It was not possible. God would have His blessed Son raised. After this He has ascended, is glorified and sits at the right hand of the Father. What honour to the One who was slain! Man can only rejoice in the perfect will and work of God.

The Scriptures go further. Romans chapter 4 speaks of Abraham and the way he 'believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness', verse 3. The apostle points out that this is imputed righteousness. The verse was written 'not for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification', verses 23-25. Let us really get hold of the meaning of this. When we believe that Jesus died and rose again, righteousness is 'imputed' to us. That is: our sin is transferred to Him, is placed on His account, and we are clothed with His perfect righteousness. We may question how can we be sure? At the cross the work of redemption was done, but the full assurance comes in the fact that 'God raised Him from the dead'. The fact that He is alive and has been seen by many witnesses is confirmation of the completed work.

Now let us refer to Romans 8:11. This is not just a matter in which we appreciate the righteousness the Lord has given us while in this world. If the Lord allows the 'day of grace' to continue further, then some of us, like those who have gone before, will be placed in the grave to await His call. So this verse tells us, 'If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken (that is, bring again to life) your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you'. The grave is never the end. You have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour; you have the most marvellous future ahead. All those who have died will be raised again, to His eternal presence, by the same power that raised the Lord Himself. But we may not all die. The Lord Jesus may come at any moment and call every believer who is still alive into His presence 'so shall we ever be with the Lord'. 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Such is the power of God! 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus', Revelation 22:20.

## The significance of His resurrection

**The resurrection is vital** to our whole Christian teaching. We can spend the last few minutes of this message looking at 1 Corinthians 15. I recommend that you read this chapter through later and get the full blessing from it for yourself. Let us highlight certain matters which the apostle Paul deals with.

1. *There were many vital witnesses to the resurrection, verses 1-11*, 'of whom the greater part remain unto this present', Paul could say. Although the Lord did not show Himself to any unbelievers after His resurrection, it was certainly confirmed by many witnesses. A witness is one who, personally, can give evidence as to the truth. The Bible strongly asserts this as a fact not to be doubted.
2. *The resurrection is vital to the whole truth of the gospel, verses 12-19*. If there is no resurrection, not only are the witnesses untrue but the whole gospel founders. 'If Christ be not raised your faith is in vain; ye are yet in your sins', verse 17. What a terrible state of affairs, if this were true. It would leave us as the most miserable people on earth, verse 19. We, of all people, have learned through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the wonderful blessings of salvation, past, present and future and the resurrection is the practical confirmation of this.
3. *The resurrection is vital to the whole future, verses 20-28*. The apostle temporarily leaves the main argument of the chapter to stress, with such directness, the truth of the resurrection. With great assurance Paul writes, 'But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept', verse 20. Here we have a second confirmation of the verse in Romans 8 we reviewed. 'Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming', verse 23. The moment is coming when the Lord Himself will take action. All will be under Him, all will be settled, death will be destroyed. The full blessings of eternity will be realised and God will be 'all in all'.
4. *The resurrection is vital to the understanding of Christian living, verses 29-34*. The apostle now returns to continue directly from verse 19. In Romans 6:1-11 we learn that in baptism the believer takes his place as being 'dead with Christ'. All the attractions of a world which rejects the Lord are put on one side. The believer is dead to them all. In this sense they had been baptised for the dead. But, says the apostle, if there is no resurrection, what is the point of baptism, what is the value of Christian suffering, self-denial, trial and persecution? We might as well live only for today, as those who care nothing for the Lord Jesus. The constant appreciation of the resurrection is vital to encourage daily Christian life and we each one must stand firm on this truth.
5. *The resurrection is vital to understanding the spiritual 'body', verses 35-49*. Let us go back for example to Luke 24:36-43. The disciples were indeed confused with all that they heard concerning the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Then, without unlocking the doors, 'Jesus Himself stood in the midst', verse 36. Some better translations give 'He Himself'. There is a real emphasis put upon that word 'Himself'. It was no fantasy of imagination, no phantom, but He Himself. Then, those words, 'Peace be unto you' rang out with such authority which they had not appreciated before. All that before was commonplace was now surrounded by the extraordinary. The difficulty to them was the closed door! It was within His power to appear and disappear. No longer was He governed by the rules of nature. Yet, in His wonderful and comforting way, He asked for food and ate a piece of broiled fish. Yes, it was He Himself. But how could all this happen? At the same time they were becoming accustomed to One who, although not present, was still there, still available. How wonderful and instructive for them! Mary knew Him in the garden. 'Rabboni, (O my Master)', she said. The two travelling to Emmaus knew Him, not on the journey, but in the breaking of bread.

Paul explains the problem in this section of 1 Corinthians 15. He points out, verses 37-38, that in nature a seed is sown but it is not that seed that comes out of the ground. It is recognisable as the same plant but the original has died. The same applies to animals and fish and there is a difference between creation on earth, the terrestrial, and the material elements of the skies, the celestial. 'So also is the resurrection of the dead', verse 42. The new body which comes from the 'natural body' is the 'spiritual body' given by God as it has pleased Him. Note the contrasts Paul uses, corruption – incorruption, dishonour – glory, weakness – power. What a transformation takes place from the natural to the spiritual body. So the Lord Jesus, in resurrection, took on the 'spiritual body'. Now, to us, these may all seem inexplicable but one day we shall understand because then all believers will have a resurrection body.

6. *The resurrection is vital to an appreciation of the coming victory, verses 50-58*. It is so lovely to note how Paul speaks, not of death, but of sleep from which every believer will rise again. As he writes to the believers in Corinth, what longing and expectation the apostle expresses, 'We shall all be changed', verse 51. If we 'sleep' when the Lord comes, 'this corruptible must put on incorruption'. If we are still alive when He calls us, 'this mortal must put on immortality'. It will all happen in a twinkling of an eye. Oh, exclaims the apostle, 'Thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ', verse 57.

Let the truth of the resurrection thrill your heart today! It brings all the certainty of what the Lord Jesus has done. It provides the guarantee for all the blessings of eternity. It gives strength to live day by day in the knowledge of His presence with us. On this day, on which the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is remembered, we can rejoice in the words of the hymn writer:

*Hallelujah! Christ has conquered –  
Conquered sin and death and hell:  
Sing aloud His mighty triumphs,  
Gladly now His praises tell;  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!  
Jesus hath done all things well.*

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, we thank Thee for that death at Calvary, which dealt with our sin. We praise Thee for the resurrection, which has confirmed to us the worth of Thy work. We worship Thee now thou art glorified and look forward to being with Thee for evermore in eternity. Amen.

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