

Why Did Jesus Rise From the Dead?

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at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.
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Acts 13:32-37

And we declare to you glad tidings—that promise which was made to the fathers. 33 God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.” 34 And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: “I will give you the sure mercies of David.” 35 Therefore He also says in another Psalm: “You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” 36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; 37 but He whom God raised up saw no corruption.

I have lamented before how we have so individualized Christianity. There is no dispute that Jesus is our personal Savior and that you can and should sing without reservation, “Jesus loves me.” But our Gospel is not thin nor is it shallow. It is much broader and deeper than commonly thought; it’s pronouncement of good news goes far beyond the individual Christian and encompasses a global impact.

Today, as never before, it’s a “me” crowd. You almost have to bribe people to come to church. They ask, “What’s in it for me?” And if the conversation of the service is not tailored to make the person feel good, get ahead, or feel that the world revolves around him, he’s not interested. Dare talk about Jesus and His glory and you risk boring the congregation. We are all wrapped up in ourselves. Surely you have heard that the smallest package in the world is a person wrapped up in himself. I don’t know who said it but it’s very true that the trouble with a self-made person is that he worships his creator. We adore ourselves.

On the occasion of a 30th wedding anniversary, a group of friends asked the wife about the secret of her marital success. She smiled and replied, “It’s because we have so much in common... we both love the same man.”

The Gospel is not about you or me. The Gospel is the good news of the Kingdom of God. It’s a message about a kingdom and the kingdom is more important than the individual.

What we celebrate today is significant to the Kingdom in ways we may have not thought about. Our Lord’s resurrection has greater significance than the fact you or I will be resurrected and get to live in heaven forever. The entire Kingdom of God rests on the fact that Jesus, who is the King, arose from the dead.

Now, I know that my title today seems odd. On Good Friday I preached on the theme, Why Did Jesus Die? Today, I want to extend from that and look at the resurrection as the beginning of a new world order, not led by some creation of the United Nations but the creation of the only One worthy to rule the new world order—Jesus.

The resurrection of Christ played a more prominent place in the preaching of the apostles than it does today. Men, like the Apostle Paul, saw the resurrection as important as the Lord's crucifixion. Thousands had been crucified but only one rose from the dead to never die again. Here, we have in our text, the very first recorded sermon of the Apostle Paul on his first missionary journey, in Antioch in Pisidia. The entire theme of his message was the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The central theme of his missionary journey was not just that Jesus died but that He rose again.

As we look at his sermon, in the very heart and theme of these verses that we've selected is the discovery that the resurrection is the coronation of the King.

I. The Resurrection is the Coronation of the King

That's why His resurrection is far greater than just your future hope of resurrection. This is the coronation of the king!

“God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.’” (Acts 13:33)

Paul says this promise of salvation was given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to us, their descendants, and it has been made and fulfilled in our time. Interestingly he cites as a reference in his sermon Psalm 2. Why Psalm 2? Because it's a kingly Psalm. Tucked in this kingly psalm is verse seven,

“You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.”

Let's look at the kingly language of Psalm 2.

A. The Kingdom Language of Psalm 2.

Let's take note of the kingdom terminology we find here.

Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, 3 “Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us.”

David is saying that the world, including its rulers, kings, and presidents, have made a compact. Even enemies can get together to fight another enemy. “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.” The kings and the kingdoms of the earth have joined leagues to do one thing—revolt against God

their Creator. He said they have come together to revolt against His Anointed, His Messiah, His King, to throw off His bonds and authority. How does God respond? Look at verse four.

He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The LORD shall hold them in derision. 5 Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure:

He laughs at them. He speaks to them. But look at what He does starting in verse six. This is God's response to the rebellion of man, not just the world's but yours and mine.

"Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion." 7 "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'" (Psalms 2:1-7)

How does God respond to the sin of mankind? He responds by establishing His kingdom through His Son, the King. God's response is not panic but laughter: "Do you think you can overthrow My King? Let all the earth come together as one—they are no match for My King. I have established His throne, I've set Him on the hill of Zion."

Friends, we have to understand this morning, if we are to be saved, and I mean me too, we have to understand the grand scheme of the Gospel and not personalize it so much that we lose the Gospel. This is the danger we have at this current hour. We've so personalized the Gospel for the individual that we lose the greater whole and good of the Gospel.

B. Sin and the Fall Was A Personal Attack on God.

It was a tragedy for Adam and Eve and their posterity, no doubt about that, but first and foremost it was a revolution against the Creator Himself. It was a challenge against God and His plan for His creation.

The second Psalm and the Apostle Paul has told us that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is God through His Son is restoring His plan and defeating the cosmic rebellion. In other words, when Jesus rose from the dead, it was God establishing the failure of mankind in their revolt against Him and that God, in His original intention and plan, is carrying on. Nothing is hindering or hampering the plan of God. Nothing stands in His way doing what He has already established in the creation. Sin has not been a hiccup or an interruption or even an irritation. God's plan marches on and it marches on in the person of Jesus Christ the King.

So in the second Psalm we see the confrontation of two kingdoms, the kingdom of men and the kingdom of God. What better way to see it than when Jesus stands before Pilate? The kingdom of the world is represented by Pilate and the kingdom of God by King Jesus.

Pilate questions Him, "Are You a king? Are you a king?" And Jesus, with no excitement in His voice, says, "You say that I am."

“No, these people, Your people, have said You are a king!”

“It is as you have said. My kingdom is not of this world, for if it were My subjects would fight for Me. My kingdom is from above.”

There it is. There’s the clash of the kingdoms. Our personal redemption is a part of that confrontation but not the sum or absolute objective of Christ’s mission.

Look at Him as He confronts the kingdom of this world represented by the government of Judea. There is Pilate in all of his regality, his glory, and his robes of splendor. There he is in his pomp and circumstance. And there is the King of Glory, not looking too glorious, standing there bloodied and broken. He’s just received the cat of nine tails, as I described about last week. He’s barely alive with hardly the strength to stand before Pilate.

Then the order comes. “Crucify Him.” And they crucify our Lord. Watch how God confronts the rebellion of man. He does it in absolute weakness. There’s nothing as powerless as death itself. When life leaves the body, there is no power or might; there is no strength to move. No strength to do. Not even the power to think. Jesus in that triumphant moment, that bloodied and bruised moment, there without power defeats all of His enemies.

In the moment of death, He cries out, “It is finished.” And in that moment He struck the death-blow against sin and all of its power. In weakness He conquers His enemy and in death itself He overcomes all who are opposed. What a remarkable king. Even when death has seized His body there is victory. That’s remarkable.

C. The Resurrection is Our Lord’s Kingship and Authority.

This is His coronation day. Look at Psalm 2 or our text, verse 33.

“You are My Son. Today I have begotten You.”

Look at those words. Don’t get confused with the word *begotten* because it can be used in different ways. In the days of our Lord and the Apostle Paul you could use the word to trace genealogy and your ancestry, or you could use the word *begotten*, as it is often thought of, for the conception and birth of a child. But also the word *begotten* was used, oddly enough, on the day a king was coronated. This is kingly language.

If a king knew the hour of death was approaching and he wanted to, he could go ahead and crown his king, like David did Solomon. When they lowered the crown upon his head they would say something like this, “Today, I have begotten you.” It’s not that he wasn’t alive before, but on this day he is recognized, coronated, as king, the rightful heir to the throne.

So God pronounces this in Psalm 2 and hundreds of years later Paul picks up on it and says, “There it is. That’s the resurrection! That’s God promising that He’s going to take His Son and elevate Him and the very act of resurrection is the very act of coronating Him King of kings and Lord of lords.

Thus, in our Lord’s resurrection He is proclaimed King and at that moment the reversal of the universe began. It’s already started. In His end the beginning started. In His resurrection, all that sin has brought is starting to be reversed.

“and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” (Romans 1:4)

II. In This Kingdom There is the End of the Curse of Corruption

This is important to Paul.

“And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: ‘I will give you the sure mercies of David.’” (Acts 13:34)

A. The First Adam Brought Death.

God’s man, made in the Garden, sinned. With that sin came the curse of death. “The day thou eatest of the fruit thereof, thou shalt surely die.” And Adam died. He was separated from God. The Bible says because of his sin we too sin and therefore die.

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—” (Romans 5:12)

That’s the curse that the first Adam brought upon us all and, because of that, you all will die. You all are going to die. The only thing that will keep that from happening is if Jesus returns in your lifetime. I pray He will. I pray He returns in my lifetime! But, you know, Paul thought He would return in his day and so did Peter. God is very long-suffering and merciful, said Peter. Even then they began to scoff and the apostle responded, “beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

All of you will know the hour of death. Your body and spirit will be separated and it will be as it has been for all who’ve gone before you. It’s going to happen because that’s the curse.

B. The Last Adam Reverses the Curse of Death.

It is not that Jesus did not die. He did die, but He did not see corruption, which means He reversed death. He died but did not stay dead, and the day is coming when death's reversal will lead to death's removal. It's like rolling up a rug. Jesus, on His resurrection day, began to take death and roll it up. He's reversing death until one day He removes it all together.

Jesus got out of death and thereby destroyed death. How so? Death is the final enemy and before Jesus' resurrection there was no escaping death. Even those whom Jesus resurrected died again and have stayed dead. For death to be death it must be final and forever. Otherwise it isn't death. But since Jesus cheated death by not staying dead. Death's power was broken and if broken, it will one day be abolished in the new world that our King will make.

Look at verse 34. Paul says this three times in his sermon. This is important to Paul.

And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: "I will give you the sure mercies of David."

Therefore He also says in another Psalm: "You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption."

but He whom God raised up saw no corruption.

So, when He got up from the grave, the process of the curse began to be reversed.

Author, speaker, and radio host, Phil Callaway was out driving with his 5-year-old son when they passed a cemetery. His son inquisitively noticed a large pile of dirt beside a newly dug grave. He then sat up in his seat and excitedly shouted, "Look, Dad, one got out!" Easter offers a special opportunity for all of us to celebrate the fact that 2,000 years ago One did get out and He has stayed out.

*Death could not keep its prey,
Jesus tore the bars away*

Death met its match and died the day Jesus rose from the grave.

Not only is that the end of the curse of corruption, it's the end of the curse of creation.

III. In This Kingdom is the End of the Curse of Creation

Not only was mankind cursed but creation was also cursed.

"For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." (Romans 8:19-21)

Paul is saying that right now creation, beautiful creation, God's handiwork, His glory displayed, is corrupted. It's marred. It's broken. That's hard to imagine, isn't it? Just the beauty of the things God has made is just astounding. Something as little as a Cardinal, a little red bird, suited in its beautiful red, gleaming in the springtime sunshine—it's beautiful! With the flowers and trees budding out and their glory coming back alive from a winter's nap, it's almost a worshipful experience as you behold the beauty of the glory of God's creative genius.

Yet the Bible says it's all groaning for its original condition. As far as the universe is concerned, it's not beautiful or pretty—it's beauty has been stolen.

And then, think about the universe and the galaxies above. Did you know that one light-year is six trillion miles? Light, traveling 186,000 miles per second will travel six trillion miles. The Milky Way Galaxy, the galaxy our solar system is in, is 100,000 light-years across. (That's 600,000,000,000,000,000 miles). There are about 350,000,000,000 galaxies in the universe. And long before such sights and knowledge were possible, Abraham Lincoln said, "I can see how it might be possible for a man to look down upon the earth and be an atheist, but I cannot conceive how he could look up into the heavens and say there is no God." But even as beautiful and amazing as outer space is this universe is cursed. Scientists tell us that it is losing energy, in other words, it is winding down.

But when Jesus rose from the dead He began to reverse the curse even of the corruption of this earth and universe.

"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea." (Revelation 21:1)

"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." (Revelation 21:4-5)

That's what He started when He got out of the grave. That's the first installment. Jesus is the first-born among many. He's the first fruits of the resurrection and in His resurrection He has begun the process of making everything new.

Not only in this kingdom is there the cessation of corruption and the cessation of the curse of creation, but in this kingdom there is the end of the curse of chaos.

IV. In This Kingdom is the End of the Curse of Chaos

We are living in chaotic times, if you haven't noticed. Mankind has so perverted itself that we've made the simple complex and we've taken complexities and made them simplistic. We've got an insane man with nuclear weapons in North Korea. We've got religious Jihadists in Iran transporting violence and terror all over the globe. Europe is on the brink of collapse and America is not far behind it. And how do you explain American politics, if not chaotic?

One of the questions posed to doubt the existence of God is the question of evil. How can a good and loving and powerful God allow all this chaotic evil? God has given a peek at His answer in the death and resurrection of Jesus. One day He's going to reverse the curse of the chaotic and the governments of this world shall be upon His shoulders.

“Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.” (Psalms 2:8)

This is God speaking to Jesus, His King. “I’m going to give you the nations.” I wish He could be put on the ballot this year, how about you? Come back, Lord Jesus. Even so, come quickly. The American political situation is in dyer straights. The democrats are brave enough to kill our unborn babies and just not brave enough to kill our enemies and the republicans are not brave enough to stand up to the democrats. A wise man said, “We have demonized those who produce, subsidized those who refuse to produce, and canonized those who complain.” I remember hearing Paul Harvey say, “It must be late in the day for little men are casting long shadows.”

The old humorous, satirical Will Rogers said, “I don’t make jokes. I just watch the government and report the facts.” You know, it would be funny if it wasn’t so sad. There’s corruption galore in Washington, D.C., and Frankfort too, and in every state capitol and every city hall. We need a king who will straighten this mess out.

Democracy is not the answer. Certainly socialism isn’t either. Socialism is fine until you spend everyone’s money and there’s no more money to spend. No, the greatest government ever known to man is a benevolent king. A ruler who will love his people sacrificially. Friends, we have the perfect government and the perfect king in Jesus Christ. The Bible says the resurrection is the beginning of God reversing the chaotic governments and societies of man.

Paul, in his longest treatise on the resurrection, says this,

“Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.” (1 Corinthians 15:24-25)

The king isn’t going to reign, the king is reigning. He must reign until all enemies are put under His feet. Well, then what is He going to do? He’s going to turn the kingdom over to His Father, but until then Jesus is ruling.

“It doesn’t look like it,” you say. “If He is, He isn’t doing a good job.” Oh, my friends, He is ruling and reigning and nothing will alarm Him. Phone calls at 3 a.m. will not bother our Lord Jesus. He knows them before they happen. He’s ruling and reigning because He rose from His dead. The day He arose He was crowned king and seated with His Father at His right hand and His rulership began that very day. Did you know the United States once had an emperor? Believe it or not, it’s true – at least, it was in the rather confused mind of Joshua A. Norton.

The story is found on Lifeway's website by Andy Cook.

“Norton lived in San Francisco during the gold-rush days of the 1800's. He was a colorful character, to say the least. When speculation in the rice market brought him to financial ruin, something snapped on the inside. He declared himself “Emperor of These United States.” It might have been a practical joke, or it might have been the result of a clouded mind. Whatever the initial reason, Norton's pretending soon grew into a delusion. In 1859 he published a proclamation that he was emperor according to an act of the California legislature. He found a sword, stuck a plume in his hat, found a cape, and marched the streets in colorful costume.

The citizens of San Francisco were amused by this ploy and so played the game with him. They gave him recognition with free tickets to special events. He was invited to gala opening nights. In fact, they allowed him to collect a small tax and issue his own currency. It was all done in the spirit of fun. But to Norton it was serious business. In fact, he expanded his authority to “Emperor of These United States and Protector of Mexico.

When he died in 1880, more than ten thousand curious people attended Norton's funeral service – one of the largest funerals ever to take place in California. He lived and died in his own delusion of grandeur. He didn't hurt anyone; in fact, he brought a bit of a smile and a chuckle to people who came across his path.

But make no mistake about it. Joshua A. Norton was never really the emperor. Had he really insisted on that and confronted the United States government, he would have been disposed of rather quickly. More than likely, he would have been confined to an insane asylum for the rest of his life.”

Do you imagine my friend that you will die and come face to face with the Creator King convinced that it was all about you, that you were the epicenter of God's creation? What a terrible and horrifying shock it will be for you to find that the name, “King of kings and Lord of lords” is an accurate and right title given not to you but to Jesus. He is no pretender; you are if you live now under your feigned and false authority.

If you ignore Jesus Christ and refuse His sacrifice on the cross and His kingship announced in His resurrection, you're living under your own rule and authority and pronounced yourself king or queen of your own empire and you're just as delusional as Joshua A. Norton.

Why did Jesus rise from the dead? Because He is Lord and His resurrection proves His rightful position as the King of the universe, and it proves His rightful place as King of your life, whether you acknowledge it or not. He has the rightful place as king of your life. That's why Jesus rose from the dead—to assume His rightful place and authority in you and in me.

I pray today that you will not wait for that day. Now is the acceptable time. Today is the day of salvation. Now is the time to bow the knee to Jesus and with your tongue confess that He is indeed your King of kings and Lord of lords. Church, it is time that we proclaim once again the

sovereignty of our King and His rightful place in the universe by the way we live in submission to Him so that men may see that we live by a different rule and order. Amen.