

The Resurrection-02 the Reality of the Resurrection

by Stephen Olford

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fundamental truth that establishes the eternal law that God cannot die, and it is the foundation of the church.

Duration: 39:54

Scripture: Matthew 28:6, John 3:5, Acts 2:24, Acts 2:27, 1 Corinthians 15:4

Topics: "Jesus Resurrection", "Christian Apologetics"

Description

In this sermon, Rev. Stephen F. Olford emphasizes the importance of recognizing the reality of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. He highlights the impact of the resurrection on various aspects of society, such as the legal system and philanthropic institutions. The sermon also addresses the fraud theory, which was invented by Jewish leaders to explain the empty tomb. Rev. Olford encourages the audience, particularly young people, to hold onto the truth of the resurrection and apply it to their lives.

Transcript

Tonight's message was supplied through the auspices of the Calvary Baptist Church of New York City. The text, 1 Corinthians 15. Now, Reverend Stephen F. Olford.

Let us pray. Speak, Lord, for thy servant hereth. Speak, just now, some message to meet my need which thou only dost know.

Speak now through thy holy word, and make me see some wonderful truth thou hast to show to me. And in speaking to me, blessed Lord, speak to the seen and unseen audience that word of resurrection, life, and power. For thy dear name's sake, amen.

The reality of the resurrection. It's sad to have to recognize that one of the theological tabs of a modern day is to deny the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Search through the papers at an Easter time like this, and study and weigh some of the topics on which the preachers of today dwell.

And so sadly as one discovers, though they carry a semblance of the message we stand for and the message we're called upon to preach, basically, fundamentally, and radically, so often the very fact of the resurrection is denied in the multitude of words and the rationalizing and the philosophizing of this tremendous truth that Jesus rose from the dead. In spite of this, however, nothing is more certain in all the

world than the bodily, literal resurrection of Jesus Christ. If we accept the evidence of the holy scriptures, the evidence of acknowledged historic facts, and the experience which is personal to men and women right down through the centuries in the church of Jesus Christ, we shall find that the fact of the literal bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is irrefutable.

That is to say, the resurrection of Christ is essentially true the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is evidentially true, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is experimentally true. Will you consider with me those three propositions as we seek to amplify them and apply them to each one of our lives here tonight? Will you forget all the thrill and excitement of what the world thinks of the resurrection, and especially Easter time, and in the silence of these next few moments, will you ask the Lord Jesus Christ to reveal himself to you in all the wonder of his resurrection power? First, then, the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is based on an essential fact. It is essentially true, essentially true.

Let me explain what I mean. When Paul says, now is Christ risen, he announces one of the greatest facts in the universe, but a fact that has to be essentially true in the very nature of the case. You see, my friend, the resurrection has to be in order to maintain an eternal law.

If Jesus is not alive tonight, if he hasn't been raised from the dead, then God ceases to exist, and the whole fabric of the universe collapses. You see, for has it ever occurred to you, my friend, that death had no claim on Christ, no claim whatsoever? Death is the consequence of sin, but here is one who was never guilty of sin. Christ only assumed sin and its consequences in order to atone for man's guilt and penalty, but Christ himself was utterly guiltless of sin in any form.

He was guiltless of its origin. We read in 2 Corinthians 5 21, he knew no sin. Sin never found a lodging place in his heart.

It never originated with him. It couldn't originate with him, for he knew no sin. He was guiltless of the origin of sin, but Jesus Christ was guiltless of obedience to sin.

1 Peter 2 22 reminds us that he did no sin. He performed no act out of accord with the will of God. He did always those things that pleased him.

He was wholly harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. He did no sin. He knew no sin.

He was guiltless of the origin of sin. He was absolutely guiltless of obedience to sin, but he was also guiltless of the outcome of sin. 1 John 3 5 tells us that in him is no sin.

Sin found no resting place or lodging place in the life of the Son of God. Therefore, he was in the absolute sense, in the essential sense, absolutely free from sin. He was sinless.

Therefore, death had no claim upon him. Death had no claim upon him. Though Peter had to say, you remember, on that memorable sermon, on that memorable occasion in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, death couldn't hold him, or in his own language, it was not possible that he, the Son of God, should be holden of death.

The psalmist had already prophesied, putting the words, as it were, into the very lips of the Savior in Psalm 16, Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption. Death had no claim upon him. He couldn't be holden of sin.

He couldn't be decayed by sin. Peter says it was not possible that he should be holden of sin. The psalmist declares, Thou wilt not suffer thine holy one to see corruption.

And Paul declares, the third day he rose again. He rose again, according to the scripture. And as we've been singing tonight, death cannot hold its prey.

Jesus my Savior, he tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord, up from the grave. He arose as a mighty victor for his foes. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is essentially true.

If God didn't raise his Son up from the dead, if God, by the Spirit of God, didn't quicken him from the dead, then, I repeat, God would cease to exist as God in all his holiness, integrity, and justice. The whole fabric of the universe would collapse. Why? Because an eternal law has been violated.

Jesus must rise from the dead, for death had no claim upon him. Once he had taken our sins upon him and their consequences, and fulfilled their penalty to the utter, utter limit by his death, he must be raised from the dead. He had to rise to establish and maintain that eternal law.

So, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is essentially true. But what is more, it's evidently true. We read in the opening passages of the Acts of the Apostle these words, he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs.

These infallible proofs constitute the evidential fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and these wonderful evidential facts may be summed up as follows. First of all, Christ's appearances. Have you ever studied them, my friend? The word says he is risen and hath appeared.

There are ten appearances of Christ scattered throughout the gospel, and each has sufficient evidential value to deal a fatal blow upon every theory that has been advanced to disprove the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here are some of them, for instance, that I throw out for some of you young people as you go back to your colleges and schools after this vacation period. There is what is known as the fraud theory, the fraud theory invented by those Jewish leaders who wanted to explain away the fact that the tomb was empty, that Jesus was no longer there.

You remember how they bribed this soldier, the god, the religious god, or the god of the temple that was set at the tomb there, at the sepulchre, to watch lest anyone should break the seal and steal the body of Jesus. But after the angel had descended and rolled back the stone and sat upon it in utter defiance of all that hell would do concerning the Savior, you remember they did quake and become as dead men. But when they recovered, they flew back to their leaders and told them what had happened, and they were bribed to say, perpetrate this lie, tell them, tell everybody you meet that his disciples came and stole them away while you slept.

Have you ever thought of the ridiculous character of that lie? How could people who were asleep know whether disciples or not did come and take them away, take him away? And how could men ever stand up and tell a lie about themselves, thus opening themselves to all attack by the entire religious world? But in any case, my friend, a lie never changes a bad man into a good man. If Jesus never rose from the dead, if it was indeed true that his body was stolen and this was an evil man and he had, in fact, organized this whole thing in order to carry it off, I repeat, a bad man, a bad man can never change into a good man. And the whole history of the world gives evidence to the fact that the goodness of Jesus Christ has permeated the entire civilized world, and there isn't anything good that exists today that hasn't its source in the fact of

Jesus Christ and his resurrection.

The great universities of the world today were founded in their first instance, all those great mighty institutions of learning, including the universities of this great city, upon Christian principle. Our entire legal system is founded upon the revealed word of God in its essence and has all the pervading characteristics of the Lord Jesus Christ and all that he means to nations. All the philanthropic great institutions, the hospitals, the missionary work.

Billy Graham came back from Africa the other day and told us in a restaurant up here that it's recorded by factual evidence that 85 percent of the entire educational system and all the blessing that flows from that into every area of Africa, 85 percent is due entirely to missionary enterprise, men and women who caught the vision of the risen savior and left this country and other countries to do missionary work throughout that great continent. The fraud theory, a perpetrated lie. Jesus is alive, risen from the dead.

No fraud theory can explain that away. Somebody advanced what is known as the swoon theory, the naturalistic theory which tries to prove that the Lord Jesus Christ never really died. He was in a swoon and in the cool of the sepulcher he revived and came out.

Can you imagine such a thing? Have you ever thought back what the savior went through? Though perfectly fit, without any weakness about his body whatsoever, yet have you ever thought back the hours starting from the Passover and in the institution of the breaking of bread through the garden of Gethsemane where he sweated, if it were, great drops of blood without a drink, without a morsel to eat, taken from there to Caiaphas, from there later on to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, back to Pilate again, then the scourging when the flesh was ripped off his back until Isaiah tells us he saw his very bones laid bare with those thongs and then the carrying of the cross, and under such weight, tumbling again and again until he must needs be relieved of its entire weight, and then Calvary? Can you see him being hammered to wood? Can you see that cross being lifted and allowed to fall into a receptacle made to receive it until every bone is jolted in his body? The hours of agony, and then that final spear thrust, and the satisfied word of the centurion, he's dead. Can you imagine him being embalmed with a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes, with swaths of linen, being laid in a tomb by a loved hand that would have never allowed it had there been a flicker of spark of life in him? Can you imagine him extricating himself from those bands as a mere man? Can you imagine him pushing back that stone and appearing before his disciples past the guards, past the seal, as a radiant, triumphant victor? The swoon theory. There are others who advance still another theory called the myth theory.

This was perpetrated and popularized by a man called Strauss. The myth theory, the myth theory by Strauss. He says that it is a mere myth, the resurrection was a mere myth, but it's fact that myth has never been known to develop in 40 to 50 days.

The abiding effects of the resurrection can never be attributed to a mere myth. A mythical man can never appear, talk, make prophetic statements, and talk to his disciples for no less than 40 days. It isn't a myth that transformed my life.

When Jesus Christ confronted me and I had a divine human encounter as a young engineer studying at university that broke right through into my life and changed me completely, I didn't just believe a myth. I met Jesus Christ, the living Lord. The vision theory advanced by Renan.

He taught or tried to teach that the resurrection was just the hallucination of a few excited women. But two things are necessary for a vision, for a hallucination. One is an intense belief and an intense expectancy, and neither of these characterize any of the disciples.

As a matter of fact, they disbelieved. We thought it was He that should redeem Israel, but now He's been dead three days. There was no expectancy for His resurrection, not even the beloved John.

There was no belief, there was no expectancy. In fact, when Jesus met them, you remember, He had to rebuke them again and again for being so slow to understand all that the prophets had written, for being so foolish as not to believe. Didn't I tell you these things before I died? How is it that you didn't expect me to arise from the dead? But during those 10 appearances, my friends, there are no less than 534 who saw the Lord Jesus Christ.

Over 500 people at once saw Him. How did all these people see the same vision at one time? It's a psychological impossibility. There are those who talk about the spiritualistic theory.

This was taught by Key, Professor Key's theory. His followers saw spirit, he said. They saw spirit.

It was the spirit of Jesus. But what did the Savior say? The Savior said, A spirit hath not flesh and bone as ye see me have. Bring me a piece of a broiled fish, and he ate it before them.

A spirit hath not flesh and bone as ye see me have. Come hither and handle me and see. In any case, I want to ask you a question, my friend.

Let me ask you this question. Is it easier to see a man or to see a spirit? And in any case, what accounted for the marks of the cross? Here was one who stood and could say to doubting Thomas as he met him the second Sunday, Thomas, Thomas, come hither. Be not faithless, but believing.

Bring your hand and thrust it into my side. Put your finger into my handprints there. Be not faithless, but believing.

A spirit hath not flesh and bone as ye see me have, repeated the Savior. The spiritualistic theory. No, my friend, the evidential facts are against anything less than the fact supreme tonight that Jesus rose again.

The evidence of Christ's appearances. But we have not only the evidence of Christ's appearances, but the evidence of Christ's announcements. No man ever before him or since ever made such announcements as Jesus did following his resurrection.

Being seen of them forty days, he spoke to them the things concerning the kingdom. And these announcements could only be made by one who had conquered the world. Listen to the word of universal power that he speaks.

He stands and he looks into the face of his disciples and he says, all power, all authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth. No one could say such a word, heaven and earth, unless he says it on resurrection ground and all the significance of what we mean by resurrection ground. He has conquered hell.

He has conquered death. He has conquered sin. He has shown to principalities and powers and the angelic hosts of heaven that he is now supreme in power in heaven and on earth and in hell.

He stood on resurrection ground and spoke not only of universal power, he spoke of universal program. He says, he shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Greater work than these shall he do, he told them before his death, because I go to my father and he see me no more.

From his control point at the throne of the universe, he was going to release such power and authority through his followers that they would represent him to the far corners of the earth. Yes, earth remote is bound, and he makes that wonderful statement because he's risen from the dead. And listen to this, he said this, not only will you know my universal power, not only will you know my universal program, but you'll know my universal presence wherever you're found in any part of the world.

Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. And ladies and gentlemen, if you're following me thoughtfully, you will see to it that once when Jesus was in Palestine, he was localized to every spot to which he went, but now risen from the dead, communicating himself through resurrection light, he is everywhere omnipotent at the same time by the power of his spirit. Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.

And our friends in China are saying that right now, behind the bamboo curtain, the Coptic church that was doubled and trebled with its audiences in worshipping God the same God, and Christ our risen Lord behind the iron curtain in Moscow over the Easter tide, are knowing the same presence. Folk over in Britain tonight, and here in this great country of America, are meeting with the same law. He's here, present by his mighty spirit.

The announcements of a risen Christ evidence his resurrection. Yes, not only his appearances, not only his announcements, but to my mind, the greatest evidence of resurrection is what happened after the Savior's ascension. He who rose ascended, and after forty days, he went back to his Father.

So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and they went forth and preached the gospel everywhere. And here, I believe, is the greatest evidence of Christ's resurrection. What happened after he ascended? Three very simple facts I want to show you, in passing quickly.

First of all, the transformation that took place in the disciples. They'd all fled. One had denied him.

One had betrayed him. He who betrayed him had committed suicide, and that was the end of that man. He went to his own place, as the scripture says.

But Peter and the rest, shut up in that upper room for fear of the Jews, trembling with fear, suddenly came face to face with the risen Christ. And he breathed on them and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. As my Father hath sent me, so send I you.

And in a few days, it happened. The Holy Ghost, who'd been given in earnest, came in all his plenitude apart from heaven, and on the day of Pentecost, the risen life of Jesus was communicated in a way they'd never known. And those men who cringed and cowered behind closed doors for fear of the Jews burst out into a religious world of their day, amidst all opposition, like flaming prophets, and no one dared tell them to be silent.

Peter stood and said, We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. Never has there been such a revolution and transformation in the life of men throughout history like the men who were changed from Calvary to Pentecost. Jesus, alive from the dead, and the cardinal thought in all their

preaching was this.

He is risen! This Christ, whom ye crucified, has God raised to be a prince and a savior. Alive from the dead. But something else happened.

Not only were the disciples utterly transformed, a miracle took place on that day of Pentecost. The church came into existence. A hundred and twenty disciples were fused into a society of saved sinners, and from that moment onwards, something began to grow that the gates of hell have never been able to overthrow.

As soon as Jesus ascended to heaven, as the risen head of the church, the body came into formation, and that body started with a hundred and twenty disciples in chapter one. In chapter two, three thousand plus a hundred and twenty. In chapter three, another five thousand added.

In chapter five, another five thousand. And in chapter one, twenty-one, Luke uses the Greek word that we translate, millions were added unto the Lord. And since then, thousands and tens of thousands have been added to the church of Jesus Christ, and in every part of the world, somewhere or other, the flag of Jesus Christ tonight flutters in the breeze.

Jesus, alive from the dead. And the wonder of it is this, wherever that church of Jesus Christ is found, three things happen. They commemorate the resurrection on the first day of the week.

Whatever changed the Jewish mind, particularly within Jewry, particularly from the Sabbath, with all the sadatic ritual and rigor, to the Sunday which of the Lord there was nothing less than a mighty, mighty event which turned a whole thinking, and I'm thinking now, of believing Jews as they met the Savior in His resurrection power. And Sundays being celebrated all over the Christian world today as Resurrection Sunday. But not only that, the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Every time a man is baptized, the woman is baptized, they go down into the water to show their death with Christ, under the water to show their burial with Christ, and up from the water to demonstrate the resurrection with Christ. And that is an active parable all over the world today, because Jesus is alive. We gather around the Lord's table here, and we partake of the bread, and we partake of the wine, symbols of His outpoured life.

But notice, we do it until He comes. Why? Because He's alive from the dead, and He who rose will come back again. We act the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And so, the church of Jesus Christ is one of the greatest evidences of the resurrection of our wonderful Lord. And crowns and thorns may perish, kingdoms rise and wane, but the church of Jesus constant will remain. Yes, the transformed disciples, the formation of the church, but I think a still more wonderful evidence of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

One day I'll tell you why I think it's even more wonderful. Though I cannot really put one against the other, I call it the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

This is a study of mine in particular, and I can't think of all his epistles. I can't think of the mighty, mighty impact that man made in his lifetime for Jesus Christ, without thinking that the most strategic blow that Christ ever struck to the whole of the first-century world was the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. He was gloriously converted.

A man who was a destroyer, a man who breathed fighting and slaughter against all the church of Jesus Christ, caused men to blaspheme, hailed them to prison, wrought havoc in the church and in the family of our Savior, and yet was gloriously converted. Why? Because he saw the risen Savior. Armed with old documents, on his way to Damascus to hail further men and women to prison and to cause them to blaspheme, he met the risen Christ, a light shone above the meridian sun.

He was stricken to the earth, and he saw in the blaze of that glory that this Jesus of Nazareth was none other than the risen Son of God, and he said, Lord, Lord, who art thou? And back came the answer, I am Jesus whom thou persecuted. It is hard for thee to kick against the goads, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And Paul, picking up his pen and writing that letter to the Corinthians, says, and last of all, and last of all, he was seen of me also as one born out of due time. By the grace of God, I am what I am.

Some of you who've done some deep reading on this great theme will have come across two very valuable books. I've read both of them. I don't know if they're published in this country, but doubtless they can be bought.

They come from the pen of two men, two very brilliant lawyers, champions of the rationalistic school, who decided many years ago to disprove the Bible altogether, to deny the supernatural in the Bible. They both agreed, however, that before they could do this, they would have to remove two mighty stumbling blocks in the way. Do you know what they were? One was the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The other was the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. And the rationalistic society which is established in London, Great Britain, gave them almost unlimited supply of money to tour the whole of the world, visit all the major libraries, and do complete research on the subject. Remember, they were two lawyers, men who were well equipped to sift evidence and come to factual conclusions and found judgments.

They were brilliant men, both of them, very brilliant men, and so they separated. They decided what their plot was to be, they decided what their procedure was to be, and so they separated. And for many, many months, considerable time, they were away from each other.

And they decided not to correspond with each other while they did their research. One research concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the other research concerning the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. At the appointed time and place, they met, and they began to discuss what they had discovered.

Each of them was a little reticent to open up, but the story is dramatic and true, that as one took the initiative and then the other followed, both had to look into each other's and say, well, my dear friend, I started out to disprove the resurrection, but I've come to the conclusion that there is no greater proof, there is no greater proven fact, than that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. And Smear or Scott said one of them to the other, I have committed my life to this doctrine, and more than that, to the person of this doctrine, even the living Son of God. Shake hands, said the other man.

I set out to disprove the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, and I finished by being converted myself. If you want to know the names of these two men, the first was Lord Littleton, his research was on Saul of Tarsus, and Gilbert West, his research on the resurrection. Two lawyers, a brilliant mind, set out to disprove what gripped them and changed their lives, and each wrote a book to support the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the mighty transforming experience of total conversion.

Yes, my friend, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is a certainty. Why? Because it's essentially true to establish an eternal law. It's evidentially true on the basis of Christ's appearances, on the basis of Christ's announcements, on the basis of Christ's ascension, and all that flows from that.

Transformed disciples, an established church, and the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. But I would fail if I finished there tonight. There is one last thought I must leave with you, and to me it's the greatest and most wonderful of all the thoughts concerning the resurrection.

I know that Jesus Christ is alive tonight, not only because it's essentially true, not only because it's evidentially true, I know that Christ is alive tonight because it's experimentally true. Listen to the words of Paul once again, Christ liveth in me. This was Paul's experience, and it has been the experience of millions and millions and millions down through the centuries, and it's my experience.

And the choir summed it up when they opened this service tonight, when they sang with vim and vigor and soul. He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today. He walks with me.

He talks with me along life's narrow way. He lives! He lives! Salvation to impart, you ask me how I know He lives. He lives within my heart, because the resurrection is an experimental and dynamic experience of men and women.

We can know three things as we leave this place tonight. First of all, a living faith in Christ. A living faith in Christ.

If Christ be not risen from the dead, then our preaching is vain, and your faith is vain also. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. My friend, human faith may be the initial instrument that God uses in bringing a soul into touch with the living Christ, but by the prevenient workings of the Holy Spirit, and because of the value and wonder of all that Jesus Christ has done and earned, a faith from our hearts, something happens the moment you stretch out your feeble hand of faith to Him.

He takes hold of it and makes it a living faith, a saving faith. That's why Paul uses this phrase, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. And think again, looking off unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God.

The moment, my friend, you look away to this risen Christ, a faith is born within you. And this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith. And there's something you can never take away from me.

You may argue my mind into utter confusion. You may be able to knock down all manner of theological arguments. You may be able, with philosophy, to bring me into an absolute attitude of groping and bewilderment, but you cannot take away a living faith.

For Jesus not only gives a faith, He sustains the faith. Even when Peter lost his loyalty, even when Peter dimmed in his love for Jesus Christ, Jesus said, Peter, I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not. Not only have I a living faith, but thank God I have a living forgiveness in Christ.

A living forgiveness in Christ! If ye be not risen from the dead, your faith is vain, and ye are yet in your sins. But now is Christ risen. And as we were seeing this morning, so I repeat again tonight, because Jesus is alive, my beloved friend, you can go out of this place with a living faith.

You can go out of this place with a deep heart experience of forgiveness, for because He lives tonight, you can know forgiveness. To Him give all the prophets witness that by faith in His name, we can know the forgiveness of sins. And my friend, you can be forgiven tonight.

Like the little child, you can go away singing, joy, joy, joy, with joy my heart is free!

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