



SERMON NOTES

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Title: Easter: Death, Resurrection and Ascension

#3 in the Series on the Acts of the Apostles

1. The death and resurrection of Christ; the problem of sin (separation from God, life of Adam).
 - a. Publishing trade magazine “*Folio*” reports that magazines that feature Jesus on their covers see their issue sales jump by as much as 45% and putting the Bible front and center can boost sales as much as 51%. In the past couple of years, magazines such as *Wired* and *Popular Mechanics* have tried to cash in on this miracle of marketing, but the most persistent devotees are *Time* and *Newsweek*, which have spent the last decade competing over who can squeeze Jesus on the front most often.
 - b. The death. Only 50 days after His crucifixion, 3000 people believed and surrendered to Jesus; if there had been a problem in the story, they would have known.
 - i. The wages of sin is death, Jesus delivers us from death. Rom. 5:14-21, “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
 - ii. Is. 53:2-11, “For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we

are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked— but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.”

- iii. The choice between terrorist (*Iestes and sicarii*) and king; the conflict of solutions. They rejected the true King and chose a terrorist, confessing they had no king but Cæsar.
- c. The resurrection. The tomb was not empty; there remained the linen cloths folded within.
 - i. Clip from the movie, Gospel of John. Take-aways:
 - 1. Mary call Jesus “*Rabboni*”;
 - 2. Secret knock on the door;
 - 3. Jesus breathes upon them to receive the Holy Spirit;
 - 4. Thomas – his doubts, his fears & questions, and Jesus’ making the time just for him;
 - 5. Peter’s restitution – not shown, but again taking the time for the one;
 - 6. At Peter’s question about John, Jesus responds, “*What is that to you? You follow Me.*”
 - 7. “*And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.*” Jn. 21:25
 - ii. 1 Cor. 15:1-8, “*Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.*”
 - iii. 1 Cor. 15:14-22, “*And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the*

dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive." This is much more than bunnies, eggs, and chocolate.

- iv. The new life in Christ, Life is indestructible. 1 Cor. 15:33-58, "*Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame. But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, "THE FIRST MAN ADAM BECAME A LIVING BEING." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY." "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING? O HADES, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."*

2. The ascension of the Christ from the Mt. of Olives, about ¾ mile away from Jerusalem.

a. Rose up and disappeared in a cloud.

- i. 2 Kings 2:9-12, "*And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?" Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." So he said, "You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if*

you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so." Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" So he saw him no more.

- ii. Ex. 24:16-18, "Now the glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. The sight of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel. So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights."

b. The angels two-fold exhortation:

- i. Why are you standing here, get going and quit dawdling.
- ii. Jesus will return as you saw Him leave. Zech. 14:4, "And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east."

c. Differing perspectives of the ascension

- i. An ancient Jew reading Acts 1 would have thought of Daniel 7:13-14, "I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed." For the Jews waiting the coming Messiah, Daniel 2, 7 & 9 are key chapters. A Jew reading this story of Christ's ascension would know that THIS was the moment that the anointed one is being exalted.
- ii. Meanwhile, an ancient Roman reading Acts 1 would have thought of an "apotheosis". At the Arch of Titus, there is a carving of the emperor being turned into a god at his death. The ascension of Jesus is not like that of a roman emperor, but the similarities would not be missed by an ancient Roman.

d. The resurrection challenges the world's beliefs. Acts 4:1-3, "Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being **greatly disturbed** that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening."

3. The call to be the witnesses of Christ; Acts 1:8, "**But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**"

- a. Last recorded incidence of Mary the mother of Jesus (cf. Acts 1:14)
- b. Rev. 12:11, "...they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death."
- c. 120 was the minimum number of people required to establish a new Jewish community with its own council of leaders. The community was made up of men and women.

- i. Jesus' brothers were there as well, although they were initially skeptical of Jesus (cf. Jn. 7:5), they became convinced of His true identity once He appeared to them after the resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 15:7).
 - d. The selection of a new apostle, Mathias, said by Eusebius to be one of the 70 (cf. Luke 10:1)
 - i. Chosen by God; Acts 1:24, "...you, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen..."
 - ii. We are chosen by God
 - 1. Jn. 6:44, *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day."*
 - 2. Jn. 15:16, *"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you."*
 - 3. Jn. 15:19, *"...I chose you out of the world..."*
 - e. Jn. 20:29, *"Jesus said to him, 'Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'"*
4. The power of our witness
- a. To the false gods of this age. Rom. 1:4, *"declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."*
 - b. To the hopelessness, apathy and meaninglessness that surrounds us.
 - c. Resurrection
 - d. Sin