

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT JESUS IS NOT DEAD?, ACTS 2:22-36

◆**Intro:** When you think of graphics to illustrate Easter what comes to mind? **Eggs**. And after all eggs represent life. Life is born from an egg. Thing of it is though, in other situations when we long for life, like when Grandpa is in surgery and it's a 50/50 chance he'll live though it -nobody goes and buys a bunch of eggs to eat, and gorges themselves like Cool Hand Luke. **Bunnies!** Rabbits have been used as Easter symbols by pagan religions for a long time. Why? Because rabbits reproduce very quickly, so they sort of illustrate an abundance of life. But most folks, when they are off to college and really struggling with what to do with their life, what occupation to enter -most folks haven't found that rabbits have the answer. **Peeps!** There's a popular Easter product! Americans buy over 700 million marshmallow baby birds during easter. But when trying to make some serious decisions, at least no one I know asks a peep for advice.

Flowers! Flowers start to come up in the Spring so they remind us of the earth being renewed after the deadness of Winter. Now none of these are right or wrong as symbols of life, but none of these things are something we gather around to celebrate. None of them are really what Easter is about.

◆There is one symbol that captures Easter for the Christian: the empty tomb. A grave without a body in it. Jesus' empty tomb is the event that changed world history. The Christian faith says that the resurrection of the dead Jesus of Nazareth, into a once-again-but-now-more-alive-than-ever Jesus is the center of all the

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history of the universe. You heard me right. Today, I'd like to look at the implications of the resurrection. That is, what does it mean that Jesus is not dead?

◆1. Resurrection means Jesus is the God in charge of everything.

He is the strongest power known to man. He is far different than Mohammed or Buddha. No other religious leader ever claimed they would come back to life. And certainly no other ever did. Only God is stronger than life and death. Therefore if Jesus did in fact resurrect, then he is more than human. Verse 24 says it is impossible for death to hold him. The record says he is the Son of God. When the apostle Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus he went from being a Christian assassinator to a Christian preacher!

◆Acts 9:20 At once [Paul] began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.

◆Here's something incongruent: many people will say they believe that Jesus resurrected from the grave, but you can't tell they believe that from the way they live. If Jesus is resurrected, then he is divine. If he is God, as he said he was before he died, then what he tells us to do is not just suggestions of possibility. Yet plenty of folks don't even think about his commandments. Either they don't believe in the Resurrection, or they have never really thought about what it means.

◆2. Resurrection means there is spiritual power we can access!

There are people who will tell you that Jesus is resurrected, but

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who also don't think he's alive. Or if he is alive, he's certainly not nearby. But can you grasp this? If Jesus is alive, then he can talk to us, tell us things, heal our bodies, stop us in our tracks. He can change the way we are! Why aren't more of us asking him our questions? Jesus is speaking and acting right now on our Earth!

◆ *Romans 8:11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

◆ Paul is not talking here about life in heaven, but on earth. In the context he's telling the Roman Christians they don't have to be slaves to the sinful nature, their urges that seem so powerful. Resurrection means there exists a power of the present Holy Spirit of Jesus that can enable you to say no to things you used to always give in to.

◆ Simple example: Leslie (not her real name) stopped in my office one day in Highland, IN. She'd grown up in our church but started to hang out with a different crowd. She had a child, but no husband. She was walking away from God. But she told me, "I was driving by the church just now and a voice said "Stop and go in there and talk to Pastor Randy." We did talk, she decided that if God was God, she should probably be following him so we studied Christian

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basics together for a while, and she rededicated herself to Jesus.

◆ More complex example: she was a Muslim married to an unfaithful husband she was planning to murder. They lived in Syria. Muslim faith allows for “temporary marriages” to serve the needs of the man. Her husband had 66 temporary marriages. But then war came to their city. Her husband got stuck in a basement of a blown up building for a week trying not to get shot. Jesus appeared to him in a dream. On another day, the same Jesus tapped on the basement window of that blown up building and left a basket of food. Long story short, the husband became a follower of Jesus, and the change won his wife to Jesus. Today they live in a refugee camp in Lebanon and share Jesus with other Muslims there.

◆ What a lot of us fail to realize is that if Easter is true, then there is a real living person named Jesus who can speak and act, and listen and guide. But because many have not really thought about this, or haven’t practiced prayer, or given attention to God -they never hear much when he talks, and don’t think you can.

◆ 3. Resurrection means Jesus is the Judge of the world. Our text says that God raised Jesus to the right hand of God. That means the ruling position in heaven.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT JESUS IS NOT DEAD?, ACTS 2:22-36

- ◆ Acts 10:41-42 (we) drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.
- ◆ *Acts 17:31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."*
- ◆ I think maybe at this point we might be seeing just how crucial the Resurrection is. If Jesus is resurrected, you don't have the option of ignoring Jesus. Wolfhart Pannenberg, a German theologian said,
 - ◆ "The evidence for Jesus' resurrection is so strong that nobody would question it except for two things: First, it is a very unusual event. And second, if you believe it happened, you have to change the way you live.
- ◆ I like how Tim Keller puts it too.
 - ◆ "We should be more sympathetic to our skeptical friends. The resurrection makes Christianity the most irritating religion on the face of the earth, ...Over the years I've had so many people say, "Well, I could never be a Christian." I say, "Why?" "Well, there are parts of the Bible I find offensive."
 - ◆ I usually say, "Let me ask you a question: Are you saying because there are parts of the Bible that you don't like, that Jesus Christ couldn't have been raised from the dead?" They say, "Well, no, I guess I'm not saying that." I said, "Well, every part of the Bible is important, but would you please put the ethical teaching aside for a minute, and here's the point: If Jesus was

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT JESUS IS NOT DEAD?, ACTS 2:22-36

raised from the dead, you're going to have to deal with everything in the Bible. If Jesus wasn't raised from the dead, I don't know why you're vexing yourself over that. But the fact of the matter is Paul was more offended by Christianity than you. He was killing Christians, and we don't advise that. But when he realized Jesus had been raised, it didn't matter what offended him anymore. It didn't matter, because it was true." And we have to keep that in mind. The resurrection is a paradigm-shattering historical event.

◆4. Resurrection means you can't stop the saving love of God.

Peter clearly explains that David's song, written 1000 years earlier, was not about David at all, but was precisely about the promised Messiah. God promised Jesus' resurrection long before it happened. Reread vs23: *This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you...put him to death.* You know what that means? God "let" them do it. Paul writes...

◆2 Corinthians 5:19 God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.

◆He was/is after us! That's the difference in the Christian faith. Religion is people trying to get to God. Christianity is God coming after us! Resurrection is proof positive that it has always been God's plan and desire to stop us from the eternal destruction we are chasing because of our sin. It means Jesus' death was no accident God had to make something out of. It was God's will and purpose to let us and our evil be placed on Jesus, and expunged from our records! God didn't raise Jesus after the

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT JESUS IS NOT DEAD?, ACTS 2:22-36

people crucified him as if to say, "Oh no you di'n't! Nobody kills my son and gets away with it! I'll raise him, and kill you!"

Wouldn't you be tempted to say that? But no, God raised Jesus to life to say, "Yes, now your sins are paid for and you may resurrect along with my son!" Which brings up this next one.

◆5. Resurrection means I will live after I die. What if this life is all there is? The Apostle Paul's advice is, get a six-pack, gather all your pretty friends and do whatever feels good to you while you can. (that's a loose translation of 1Cor.15:32) It the secular worldview lots of people live by; squeeze out every bit of pleasure while you can cuz when you die it over. That's the logical conclusion of atheism too: if there is no God, and no spiritual realm, then as Jean-Paul Sartre said, "life is an empty bubble, floating on the sea of nothingness." But, *the resurrection is proof that we live twice; that there is another existence beyond this one.* It can be an "Uh-oh!" or it can be an "Oh boy!" So a final observation about Resurrection.

◆6. Resurrection means Jesus can forgive all my sins. I hope you noticed this one in our text for today.

◆Acts 2:38 "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

◆In a parallel passage that also cites David and Psalm 16 we read:

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- ◆ *Acts 13:36-38 "For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed. But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay (resurrection...). "Therefore (means...), my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.*
- ◆ Because Jesus is not dead he is the person who can wipe all the sin stain off of your heart and by his divine might, forever shield us from the wrath we deserve. He paid the debt for your evils on the cross on Good Friday. He and he alone can make you right with your Maker.
- ◆ 7. Resurrection means I should repent and realign my life with Jesus. Many folks just assume that everyone goes to a better place, a better world after this one. That's not true. Heaven is not automatic. People don't resurrect to LIFE just because that's what happens after you die. God is not ignoring all the wrong things you and I are doing. No justice demand our failures, our darknesses, our wrongs be paid off. So Easter does not mean everyone is destined for heaven.
- ◆ *Daniel 12:2 Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.*
- ◆ Which one will you be? If your sins have been pardoned before God himself, then you are freed to eternal life beyond the grave yourself. This is what makes such things as the hope of a better

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT JESUS IS NOT DEAD?, ACTS 2:22-36

world after this one possible. Now is the day to ask. Now is the day to turn! Give your heart and life to Jesus, the firstborn of the dead. The Resurrected One.

✦ **Conclusion:** John Ortberg: "People have not gathered for the past 2,000 years to say, "The stock market has risen. It has risen indeed." They have not gathered to say, "The dollar has risen. It has risen indeed." Or, "the employment rate has risen." Or, "the gross domestic product has risen." Or, "General Motors has risen." Or, "The value of your 401(k) has risen." Here's the one hope that has held up human beings across every continent and culture for two millennia of difficult times of poverty, disease, pain, hardship, [and] death itself: "Christ is risen. He is risen indeed."