

INTRO:

hey it is great to see you this morning/Recently, I heard-about a conversation between a husband and wife. She was getting ready for church ON Easter, and THOUGHT her husband was too...UNTIL she came out and he was still in his pajamas. So she says, “*Why aren’t you ready? We gotta go.*” He says, “*I don’t wanna go.*” She’s like, “*why not?*” He says, “*1. Nobody’s friendly to me; 2. Everyone’s suspicious OF me; and 3. There’s too much pressure FOR me.*” So being a loving wife, she says, “*1. That’s not true. People ARE friendly to you. 2. That suspicion is in your head. And 3. You have to go... You’re the Pastor.*” That may or may not have been me and my wife this morning and I tell you it...cuz I think ALL of us come into an Easter gathering like this as mixed bags. Many of you are stoked and rightly so, because TODAY represents a kind of Christian Super Bowl/BIGGEST day of the year/Jesus Christ resurrected from the grave!...Others of you, feel like you SHOULD be stoked, but kinda feel guilty that you aren’t more-so and so you’ve mustered up a smile to power-through...While still OTHERS of you aren’t stoked at all cuz in the back of your mind, you’re anticipating having to endure a guilt-laden sermon about why you SHOULD be stoked!...For one reason of another, all of us kinda expect that, since it’s Easter, there’ll be/or should be this kinda “pep-rally” spirit about things, which unfortunately can add a lot of unintended pressure: Pressure to look good, feel good, for ME...pressure to do words good! And to some degree that’s ALL good. Easter IS the celebration of the GREATEST event in human history! But here’s the thing: The First Easter/the one where Jesus ACTUALLY rose from the dead, as special as it was/which is why we’ve done some *special* things with food, photos, table-gifts - that first Easter wasn’t ultimately impressive: If ya don’t know the story: 1 lady showing up early morning...tellin’ 12 scared dudes she’d seen Jesus...Those dudes NOT initially believing her until they too saw Him. Then, 500 eye-witnesses coming forward, but none of whom were like influencers...Just nothing impressive!

So here’s what we’re gonna do for the next few minutes together/2 Things: **One**, Breathe! Take a breath. WE are really glad you’re here for this very special, BUT non-impressive gathering, in which, as we say every week, we just hope that: *the simple hospitality and surprising grace of Jesus collides for your encouragement...*And then **Two**, I wanna give you: **5 Reasons today/5 LEGIT Reasons WHY You Can Believe In A Resurrected Jesus!** So that, if you’re not sure ABOUT Jesus today, you’ll see that you have GREAT reason for trusting and entering into relationship WITH Jesus! And if you HAVE trusted Him, that you’ll be FURTHER encouraged, as you see that He REALLY is a **sure foundation for your life!**...So, pretty simple! **Ya ready?**

TEXT:

John 11:25-26, Jesus said, and I quote, “*I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.*” **5 Reasons WHY You Can Believe In A Resurrected Jesus Today!** **Number 1: Jesus Really Died!**¹ I know, that might sound incredibly obvious, but you understand, if there’s no REAL death of Jesus, there’s no point in talking bout a REAL resurrection BY Jesus. Like if, Jesus, didn’t bodily die, as some early church heresies claimed, cuz it was assumed His body was a

¹ Insights on this point adapted from: “5 Important Things to Know About Cross and Resurrection” - John Piper

kind of spiritual mirage OR that He was in some way orchestrating the world's greatest slight-of-hand, then the whole possibility for an actual resurrection is moot. But the fact is: Jesus DID... REALLY die. Cuz not only was crucifixion created to produce CERTAIN death, but JESUS' crucifixion was public! As *Acts 26:26* says, "*it didn't happen in a corner!*" Leading Kings/government officials of the time were well aware of it. Crowds of people saw it happen. AND secular historians of the earliest centuries, including Tacitus, treated it AS historical fact, saying/I quote, "*Christ...had been put to death as a punishment during the reign of Tiberius at the hand of one of our Procurators, Pontius Pilate.*"²...**Jesus Really Died!**

Number 2: Jesus Was Really Buried!³ The beautiful thing about resurrections is they're super easy to disprove. Cuz all you gotta do is produce a body *right?* And the thing with Jesus' body was: it shoulda been really easy to produce. Cuz we know exactly where He was buried. *1 Corinthians 15:3-5* tells us that Jesus was buried in the tomb of a wealthy Jewish official named Joseph of Arimathea. So, just go to the tomb and produce the body! Bing, bang, boom!... Furthermore, historians've noted that, it was common in Jesus' day for the tombs of "holy men" to be enshrined. We know of at least 50 religious leaders in Palestine who had their tombs enshrined as places of worship. And given that Jesus was the most famous holy man OF all time, having His tomb being enshrined would've been a given. Only problem? There's absolutely no trace, of any veneration, of His tomb...precisely BECAUSE, His body was no longer IN the tomb. It's like those old Sherlock Holmes episodes where Sherlock concludes that the thief of a rich home is actually a member of the family. BECAUSE he realizes that when the robberies take place, the family dog is never heard barking - and the family dog ALWAYS barks at strangers. SO, he concludes, whoever's robbing the place must not be a stranger! Ah ha! Something unexpected has happened... When we come to Jesus' grave, there's no dog barking. Something unexpected must've happened!... Not to mention, burial rituals at the time included wrapping dead bodies in roughly 100lbs of cloth and spices, which for Jesus meant: He actually DID resurrect OR He'd been holding out on everyone that knew Him that, basically, he was Hebrew Jason Bourne - ya know, able to bench 100lbs off his body, power-lift a massive stone out from His tomb, sneak past Roman guards, who'd literally promised their lives in exchange for guarding the tomb AND doing it ALL after having been tortured for 6 days and not eating for 3! Some of you all get hangry after 20 min...**Jesus Was Really Buried!**

Number 3: Jesus Was Really Seen Alive!⁴ Theologian NT Wright said/*listen*, "*If it was only an empty tomb and there'd been no sightings OF Jesus, people would've believed the body was stolen. If there were only eyewitnesses who claimed to see Jesus, but the tomb still had a body in it, people would've believed the eyewitnesses were hallucinating. But only if all these were true; the empty tomb, eye witness accounts and (more) could Christianity have ever begun. Thus, he says, the resurrection must've been true.*" And what Dr. Wright's calling upon there is the fact

² Tacitus - Annals 15:54

³ Insights on this point adapted from: "Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?" - William Lane Craig + "Did Jesus Really Rise From Death: Vintage Jesus: Week 4" - 10/29/06 - Mark Driscoll + *Death By Love*, p.29 - Mark Driscoll

⁴ Insights on this point adapted from: "Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?" - William Lane Craig + "Did Jesus Really Rise From Death: Vintage Jesus: Week 4" - 10/29/06 - Mark Driscoll

that unlike in legends and myths throughout history, the Biblical accounts of Jesus' resurrection are replete with eyewitness names. So if you wanted to put an end to any talk of resurrection, ALL you would've needed to do is undermine the account of just ONE of those eye-witnesses. I mean in a court of law today, all it takes is one to convict right? With Jesus' resurrection we have over 500! For example, according to *Luke 24*, *John 20*, *John 21*, and *Acts 1*, we've got the 11 disciples. According to *1 Corinthians 15*, there's the Apostle Paul. Also in *1 Corinthians 15*, we have Jesus' younger brother James - who can I just say for a second: If there was ANYONE who would've gained by proving that Jesus had NOT resurrected, it was James. Cuz those of you with siblings know: admitting your sibling is AWESOME/much less THE MESSIAH, would be the worst! If there was anyone who shoulda been like, "*Yeah, He ain't alive. And frankly, this is sooo Jesus;*" it woulda been James. But he didn't. He counted himself AMONG the eye-witnesses... And my personal favorite: According to *John*, *Matthew*, *Luke* and Paul in *1 Corinthians*, we have a crowd of more than 500 eye-witnesses, including SPECIFIC women like Mary Magdalene and a woman named Cleopas. And I love that, because given that Jewish culture was patriarchal, the testimony of women back-then was sadly regarded as unreliable. So the fact that women were not only INCLUDED as eye-witnesses, but were some of the CHIEF eye-witnesses/Mary being the first to see the empty tomb, just shows that things aren't being made up!...And I know/you say: "*Well, there MAY'VE been eye-witnesses. But they were just deluded.*" Mass delusion right?...The only problem with that is: Clinical psychologists have generally defined delusion as, "*when a person has strong beliefs that AREN'T shared by others.*"⁵ So to "mass...delusion" is kind of an oxymoron...**Jesus Was Really Seen Alive!**

Number 4: Jesus Was Really Believed To Be Resurrected!⁶ One of the things that's fascinated scholars is the fact that even if you had no empty tomb and no eye witnesses, you'd still have to account for the EXTRAORDINARY level of belief those, who claimed to've seen Jesus, held to; AND really while having every predisposition to the contrary. *Cuz just think about the Disciples*: These are guys, who in being Jews, expected that the Messiah was gonna come, overthrow Rome, and re-establish Israel's prominence. What they DIDN'T expect was for the Messiah to die! So a resurrected Messiah/one coming back from the dead? That wasn't even a category. Not to mention, Jewish belief about the afterlife PRECLUDED anyone's rising from the dead BEFORE the general resurrection OF the dead at the end of the world. So again, there's nothing in the disciples that would've naturally lent them to believing Jesus had resurrected. AND YET, their belief was SO strong that each of them were willing to die for it! The Apostle Paul for example, you might know, was a brilliant and devout, Jewish Pharisee, who routinely persecuted and killed Christians - like a Harvard-trained terrorist. BUT after a personal encounter with the resurrected Jesus, which you can read about in *Acts 7*, he went on to become the most dynamic defender and expander OF the Christian faith! AND doing it while NOT ONLY walking away from power, prestige, and promise within the Jewish community, where according to *Acts* and *Philippians*, he'd become something of a rising star, BUT while knowing it was gonna cost him his life!...Cuz sure, people knowingly lie and say they believe things that aren't true,

⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-45548755.amp>

⁶ Insights on this point adapted from: "Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?" - William Lane Craig + "Did Jesus Really Rise From Death: Vintage Jesus: Week 4" - 10/29/06 - Mark Driscoll + "The Resurrection Makes It Real" // Romans 6:1-5 // Easter 2019 - J.D. Greear + "Media Bias and the Resurrection of Jesus" - R Fowler White

especially in order to gain things like money, power, respect. But what people usually DON'T do is lie when they know it'll cost em those things. And what they almost NEVER do is lie when they know it'll cost em their life or the lives of their loved ones!... Years ago, I came to see how true this is when I read some of the testimony of Chuck Colson. Colson, you might know was the Special Counsel to President Nixon and one of Nixon's inner circle. So not an exaggeration to say, one of the most powerful men, in the world, in his time! And so when Watergate broke he and about 11 other men met secretly, came up with a story to shield the President, and SWORE to each other to maintain it. Again, we're talking some of the toughest/most powerful men in the world! ***But ya know what Colson said?*** He said within 3 weeks every one of em caved. He said/ ***listen***, *"I KNOW the resurrection is a fact...How? Because 12 men testified they'd seen Jesus raised from the dead, then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Every one of em was beaten, tortured, stoned and put in prison. They would've never endured that, he said, if it weren't true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world - and they couldn't keep a lie for 3 weeks. You're telling me 12 apostles could keep it for 40 years? Impossible."*...**Jesus Was Really Believed To Have Risen!**

Number 5 and Finally: Jesus' Resurrection Has Really Been Accounted For!⁷ There's this whole field of scholarship called textual criticism. And what it does is use everything from archeological records, to language studies, to historical data to determine the reliability/or unreliability of ancient manuscripts. I gotta taste of it in seminary, and I gotta tell ya...it is just the worst! Some of you all might love it/I did not, because my brain doesn't work that way. So let me just summarize the majority opinion ABOUT the reliability of the Bible's resurrection account! ***Ya ready?*** It's Reliable! Congratulations, you have a seminary degree! And of course, like with everything, there's some fringe groups out there who feel it's their goal to show the Bible to be unreliable/and unfortunately they're the ones who always write for magazines in Supermarket check-out lines, but any serious scholar worth his or her salt - regardless of if they believe IN the resurrection, AGREE that the Bible's account OF the resurrection is reliable. For example, Jewish historian Josephus, who was super close to the situation, cuz he was born just a few years after Jesus died/in his most famous writings called *The Antiquities*, said this: *"About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he performed surprising deeds...And when, upon the accusation of the principal men among us, Pilate had condemned him to a cross, those who'd first come to love him did not cease. And **He appeared to them spending a third day restored to life.**"*...Or more recently, consider Archeologist Sir William Ramsay, who set out to DISPROVE the reliability just of the Book of Acts...ONLY to end-up concluding this about Luke - the author of Acts and the Gospel of Luke from where we find the most details ABOUT Jesus' resurrection. He said, *"Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy; he's possessed of the true historic sense...In short, (he) should be placed along with the very greatest of historians."* ***Ya see? Jesus' Resurrection Really Has Been Accounted For,*** which is how Thomas Arnold - the former chair of Modern History at Oxford - so ya know, not a dummy - can say, *"I know of no*

⁷ Insights on this point adapted from: F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 90-91. + "Did Jesus Really Rise From Death: Vintage Jesus: Week 4" - 10/29/06 - Mark Driscoll

fact in history, which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort...than the great sign which God (has) given us that Christ died and rose from the dead!”⁸

CONCLUSION:

So I began this morning quoting Jesus, who in **John 11:25-26** said, *“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever BELIEVES in me, though he die, yet shall he live; and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”* The reason Jesus’ words there are SO important is because He’s reminding you that YOUR life is tied to BELIEF in Him as the resurrected savior. And when I say “belief” I mean not just mental assent. Cuz of course anybody can assent to the resurrection making coherent sense of the details or being grounded in evidence. I MEAN, just as assenting to a bed being comfortable, is not the same as actually throwing your weight ON and resting IN it; so assenting to the fact of Jesus’ resurrection is not the same as throwing the weight of your life ON and resting IN Him!...Cuz see resting in the resurrected Jesus/or as He says, “living and not dying” means: you, not only, see Jesus as the only savior from the one problem that affects all of us - death/resulting from your sin and mine - BUT you see that AS your risen Savior, death and its effects no longer have final say in your life!...**Friends**, THAT’S what we celebrate on Easter: Jesus’ resurrection having set into motion an overthrow of a broken world ruled by sin, death, and all its ills. And while we await for those ills to finally be eradicated, the reality for you/if you BELIEVE is that NONE of it - not guilt, injustice, addiction, shame, sorrow, despair/NONE of it has the last word...There’s perhaps no better picture of this than from a gentleman by the name of Donald Grey Barnhouse, who experienced the awful tragedy of losing his wife to cancer, leaving him with 3 children under the age of 12 when she passed. And on the day of the funeral, Barnhouse and his daughters were driving to the service when a truck passed, casting a large shadow across their car...And Barnhouse knowing that his oldest daughter was grieving particularly hard, turned to her and asked, *“Sweetheart, would you rather be run over by that truck or by its shadow?”* ...Looking at her dad, she replied, *“By the shadow, I guess. It can’t hurt me.”*...Barnhouse then said, *“That’s right Sweetie! And even though pain, suffering and death can feel like getting hit by a truck...in going to the cross for our sins and then rising from the dead, Jesus Christ got hit by the truck of death, so that you and I who believe, will only ever have to be hit by the shadow.”*...*“I am the resurrection and the life,”* He said. *“Whoever BELIEVES in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”* This is the guy - the one not just willing to die instead of you, but able to beat death FOR you. Behold and Believe your resurrected Savior, in whom you have **a sure foundation...Let’s Pray...Amen!**

⁸ see his *Sermons on the Christian Life: Its Hopes, Its Fears, and Its Close* [6th ed.; London, 1859] 324)