

Of First Importance 2

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[0 : 0 0] It was so lovely yesterday to, oh there must have been 130 or so kids running around the place and their parents and it was just alive, it was fantastic. And it's lovely to hear the young voices and young screams of energetic young people running places and it's just beautiful.

For those who are staying in, have a look at 1 Corinthians chapter 15 please, hope you're up to there, 1 Corinthians chapter 15. And if you don't know me, my name's Roy, I'm one of the pastors here and we're going to be spending our time now looking at this part of God's Word, considering the things of the resurrection.

It's great having people from Morning Church and Uni Church and all in one place together. A couple of times a year that happens and that's fantastic. Let me encourage you if you're at Morning Church to come along and check out Uni Church sometimes as well.

It starts at 4.30 down at the Global Change Institute. So we're going to look at 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and I'm going to read from verse 12 down to verse 28.

On Good Friday we read the first 11 verses. Now kicking off at verse 12.

[1 : 1 2] Now if Christ is proclaimed as risen from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there's no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We're even found to be misrepresenting God because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise, if it is true that the dead are not raised.

For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead.

The first fruits are those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive, but each in his own order.

[2 : 3 3] Christ the first fruits, then at his coming, those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God, the Father, after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

For he must reign until he's put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For God has put all things in subjection under his feet.

But when it says all things are put in subjection, it's plain that he's accepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

We are so blessed to have God's word and his clear revelation of what the resurrection is all about. Today is the day in the Christian calendar.

It is the day. The day we remember the culmination of God's wisdom and God's power around 2,000 years ago. It's the day we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

[3 : 50] Yet our world is highly conflicted. For many in Brisbane, this day makes no sense at all.

It's Sunday. It's the middle of a long weekend. There's Easter bunnies. There's Easter eggs. There's Easter bilbies and hot cross buns. We don't give people Easter cards, gift cards yet, but we give chocolate over prices, don't we?

And Friday and Monday are public holidays, which is great. And so it's time to get out of town and get washed out of the campsite if you've gone camping. And there's some idea in society that religious people will go to church and you saw it on the news on who went to church on Friday.

And we'll get some vague idea of why people go to church, but our world thinks it's a bit of a stretch to believe someone rose from the dead.

Really. I mean, even some church leaders doubt it. Jesus, risen from the dead? Really? Dead people stay dead, don't they?

[5 : 00] And yet there's this niggling hope. There's this niggling hope that there is a heaven and that they will be there. Just leave the God part out of it.

Happy to have the holiday. Happy to have the holy day off. But that's about it, really. I'm so glad that in this Western world that we actually do have a long weekend.

A weekend of remembering and rejoicing in all that's been achieved at the cross by Jesus who was crucified, dead and buried, raised from the dead and is now seated at the right hand of the Father in glory.

The good news is that we can be certain of being right with God and welcomed into heaven, but not by works, but by the finished work of Jesus at the cross. That one man has risen from the dead, never to die again, and his name is Jesus.

And it's this truth of history that changes everything. It's this truth which is of first importance. So let's consider it a bit more now here.

[6 : 06] We've read the account of the resurrection of Jesus in Mark chapter 16, and almost every page of the New Testament assumes it is true.

It's not something the Bible sets out to prove is true. The scriptures assume the resurrection of Jesus is true. For all those who wrote it did so, having seen the risen Lord Jesus, or having absolute confidence that he had been raised.

The account is clear. The women didn't expect to find anything other than a corpse. They go to the tomb, prepared to anoint his body with spices, not knowing that they wouldn't be able to move the rock that was over it.

Maybe one of the soldiers guarding it would move it for them. They get there, the stone's already been rolled back, they enter the tomb, and there they're told by the young man, probably an angel in the tomb, who informs him that Jesus of Nazareth has risen.

His body's not there, and he's gone back to where it all started, back to Galilee, which is a fair, fair, fair way, way, from where they are in Jerusalem. And then they're to tell the disciples that they'll see Jesus there.

[7 : 25] And then we read about his appearances here in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verses 4 to 11. Have a look at it with me, just a couple of sentences back further in chapter 15. So we see the appearances of Jesus.

Paul lines them up for us. Did you see there? Cephas has seen him. Then the 12, verse 5.

Verse 6, then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. So when Paul writes, 1 Corinthians chapter 15, there's people around the place who actually saw Jesus like he's saying.

Over 500 of them at one time. Then he appeared to James, see there in verse 7, that's his brother, and then to all the apostles. And then last of all, verse 8, as to one untimely born, he appeared to me, also to me.

So Paul saw him, the least of all the apostles, who was once a persecutor of Christians, has now become the religious leader of the day. There's all the evidence you need to establish the fact that the resurrection of Jesus happened.

[8 : 43] That's the truth. His body's not in the grave, he's not in a tomb. He was physically raised. It's not like he lives on in the heart of those who believe in him.

That's not his resurrection. His resurrection is physically from the dead. He was raised from the dead, spoke with people, ate with people, walked with people, was seen by hundreds of people.

And notice this is in accordance with the scriptures. Back there in verse 3, for I delivered to you as of first importance, what I received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised, verse 4, on the third day, in accordance with the scriptures.

And what part of the Bible would you go to to think about this, that Jesus rose from the dead in accordance with the scriptures, the Old Testament part of the Bible. Well, Psalm 16 speaks about the son not being abandoned to the grave.

Psalm 23 read about, speaks about the great hope of living with the Lord forever. Daniel chapter 7 speaks about the Messiah be giving an eternal kingdom over everyone and everything.

[10 : 03] And the way of the Old Testament speaks about the great acts of salvation and deliverance occurring on the third day. Hosea chapter 6 speaks about salvation coming to Israel on the third day.

And Jesus taught that in the life of Jonah being swallowed up by the big fish and then being vomited up on the beach, was to teach us about Jesus being killed and rising on the third day.

Matthew chapter 12. So here's the summary of what Paul preached, the message which was of first importance, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures and that he appeared to Cephas and the 12 and so on.

It's important that it all goes together. You can't leave one part out. If you do, you wreck it all. You have no gospel at all. Christ died for our sins, Christ is dead, Christ was buried, Christ was risen from the dead.

Romans chapter 10 verse 9. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved.

[11 : 19] Without the resurrection, there is no salvation. So let's ponder the resurrection of Jesus a bit deeper now as we hear what God himself makes of it. 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verse 12.

You see the question, if Christ is proclaimed as risen from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If it's true, right, all will be raised.

There is a general resurrection. If it is true that Christ is risen from the dead, and it is, the answer is, you cannot say that there is no resurrection of the dead.

The resurrection of the Christ and the dead is something bigger than just Jesus rising from the dead. If Jesus the Christ has risen from the dead, he is the one who now rules the cosmos and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead guarantees that every man, woman and child who has ever lived or who ever will live will rise from the dead.

That's what Paul is saying here, what God is telling us in his word. And so, all will be judged. If it's true, and it is, all, everyone will be raised and we're told that we'll all be raised to face the judgment of God as we're told about in Acts chapter 17.

[12 : 45] It's the punchline in Paul's sermon in Athens. Let me read it out to you. Acts chapter 17, verse 30 to 31. The times of ignorance got overlooked but now he commands all people everywhere to repent because he's fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he's appointed and this he has given assurance to all by rising him from the dead.

The resurrection of the dead is the great day of judgment of mankind when all people will stand before the living Lord Jesus and receive the verdict on their eternal future.

This is of first importance to get a hold of here and it's great news to know about eternal glory for those who've been waiting for his return. He's going to return and for all those who are looking forward to it and are trusting him now looking forward to that day eternal glory for those who've been waiting for his return.

however the judgment is eternal suffering for those who've been and who have lived their lives opposed to him either actively or just by ignoring him passively and who will meet him with utter surprise and shame and humiliation as they bow the knee to him.

that is what the resurrection of the dead is all about Daniel chapter 7 Matthew 25 Acts chapter 17 Philippians 2 Revelation 14 those sort of parts of the Bible both believer and unbeliever will be raised from the dead because Jesus has risen from the dead the resurrection is good news for those who've believed the good news of the gospel we are saved from the rightful wrath of God for our sins but it's terrible news it's terrible news for those who haven't there's no escaping God's wrath for those who haven't believed in the crucified dead and buried and risen Lord Jesus and Paul then lays out some more implications of the resurrection being false if there's no resurrection it's a travesty there's no hope and those who believed in it are to be pitied beyond all people so if it's false there's no hope just see there in verse 13 to 18 if there's no resurrection of the dead then Christ cannot have been raised verse 13 if our ultimate fate is just to rot in the ground become worm food and return to the elements of the universe if it's impossible for the dead to be raised from the grave then it's impossible for Jesus to have been raised he was just a man after all and so the apostles preaching is in vain it's a waste of time and a waste of effort in fact no point gathering here today no point in the apostles having preached the message they did there was the one thing you'll find in every sermon the apostles preached was the resurrection if Christ Jesus has not been raised then there's no point worshipping him he can do nothing for you he's just another dead man there's no forgiveness to be found in him so no salvation and the preaching of the cross has no power and there can be no salvation for anybody no point anyone believing it if it's not true if it's just wishful thinking wishful thinking doesn't get you very far death wins not only that verse 15 the apostles would have been preaching lies about God they would have been lying prophets for they taught that God did raise Jesus and so again in verse 16 if the dead are not raised not even Christ has been raised in verse 17 without the rising of Jesus from the dead death still wins it hasn't been conquered without the raising of Jesus his death didn't work didn't accomplish what he set out to do sin is not dealt with everything which God stands for would have failed if there's no resurrection see we're still in our sins there's no hope

[17:18] Romans chapter 4 verse 25 tells us that Jesus was given up to death on the cross for our wrongdoing and raised so that we might be declared okay with God that we might be justified that we might be okay with God and verse 18 those who have believed who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished have come to ruin are lost are destroyed their faith in Jesus was pointless as is yours if there's no resurrection from the dead death wins the grave is the end there's no justice there's no meaning there's no purpose in life nothing and so pity the Christian verse 19 if in Christ we have hope in this life only we are of all people most to be pitied if believers have trusted in Jesus and lived now

I'm sorry lived how he would have us live if there's no resurrection it's just for this life only well we're to be most pitied of all people I mean consider Paul's life consider the apostle at one stage he had everything he was the up and coming most starry eyed progressive educated Pharisee of the lot high achieving leader among all the Pharisees and then he becomes a Christian and instead of being a persecutor of Christians he's persecuted by the ones he once associated with he was taken to Rome in chains for his hope in the resurrection and as he said in Acts chapter 24 verse 21 it's with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I'm on trial before you this day I mean listen to his pathetic life here's his pathetic life because of his hope in the resurrection 2 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 25 following three times I was beaten with rods once

I was stoned three times I was shipwrecked a night and a day I was drift at sea on frequent journeys in danger from rivers danger from robbers danger from my own people danger from the Gentiles danger in the city danger in the wilderness danger at sea danger from false brothers in toil and hardship through many sleepless night in hunger and thirst often without food in cold and exposure why all because of his hope in the resurrection why would you do the things that Christians do this life was all there is why would you suffer for the name of Jesus if there's no glory to come why would you be different to those around about you if you didn't have Jesus Lord why would you give your money to spread the gospel if it was to sacrifice your holidays to tell people about Jesus if it wasn't the most important news anyone could ever hear why would you say no to the promotion so you can get ahead of the crowd and bring your kids up to know

Jesus if you didn't think resurrection was more important why would you be ready to die for him instead of deny him if you didn't believe that to be with anything this world can offer why would you suffer being restricted in your career because people know you love Jesus unless you are looking forward to please God not man why would you serve others at church instead of going to the holiday house fishing every other Sunday why I know a man who was talking to another bloke at soccer soccer dad inside the field one day and they got to talking about what they did during the week and one said he was a lawyer and he asked the other what he did and he said well he tells university students about Jesus during the week the one who was a lawyer said well that's a waste of time isn't it precisely if there's no resurrection

I want to do other people think that your life is pitiful not necessarily because you're down and out in your luck but because your values your priorities your living standards are different to theirs given the opportunity you could have had to progress up the ladder so to speak in this world do your decisions and priorities do my decisions and priorities demonstrate that our hope is not in this world but in a resurrection and if others do think your life is pitiful well how do you feel about it best not to resent the sacrifice but to can it all joy to be living in the service of the Lord knowing that your work in the Lord is not in vain but more of that next Sunday well we see the first fruits then in verses 20 to 24 the reality though is that

[22 : 51] Christ has been raised from the dead he is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep there was a first fruits offering made to God in the Old Testament a first portion of the crop being offered in thanksgiving to God in the hope of the crop to come the grain the fruit whatever the first fruits was the promise of more to come when the whole crop was ready to be harvested that's the idea of the first fruits and so Jesus not only the king who was slain for sins he's also the representative of the crop to come he was raised first in time before the actual harvest he himself is representative of those who will be raised who will be like him the harvest to come that is people with resurrection bodies clothed in glorious body never to die again to live forever he is the promise the pledge of the same to come that's what it's about his resurrection a harvest to come far greater than can ever be numbered if

Adam brought death Jesus brings life and is the first fruits of all those who will live with him and so we can see when it comes to resurrection Christ the first fruits that's already happened and there's just the finale to come verses 24 to 28 all that remains is the harvest the finale his coming which is due at any time now any tick of the clock when believers will be raised at the same time unbelievers will be raised that day is coming believers will be raised to eternal glory and unbelievers will be raised and then shut out of glory for all eternity then it's the end that is the end or actually the goal of what was to be accomplished when the universe was all put in order under

God as intended from the beginning in verse 24 Jesus will have destroyed all the opposing authorities all enemies will be completely under his feet in subjection to Jesus and then Jesus will willingly hand over the kingdom to God the father and willingly submit to God the father as he always has and always will and so God will be God completely satisfied within himself having the universe and everything rightly responding to him God will be all in all God will be supreme that's what it means unopposed ruler of the cosmos wonderfully worshipped by those who trusted in him and woefully resented by those who haven't the resurrection of Jesus is the certainty of the resurrection of the dead it gives us real hope Jesus has been indeed raised from the dead the first fruits of those who fallen asleep and because of that we can have great hope that life goes on beyond the grave a hope that transcends anything this world can give with a solid hope being raised to glory not because we've been good enough but because the

Lord Jesus has been raised and was good enough and because of that we have a hope that will be raised and we'll see the risen Lord Jesus as well that's what keeps me going just by you know as we live in this world it gives a perspective of things beyond this world beyond my control gives me a bigger picture of the priorities of life in this world it shapes the priorities of my hopes and dreams for myself my family and our church and I keep and I keep trusting that each of us would have that kind of picture as well I trust that it keeps you going as well and since the resurrection is true it should be the thing of first importance in our lives the thing we wake up to in the morning and the thing that we go to sleep remembering at night and the thing that shapes every moment in between let's pray our father in heaven we thank you and praise you that you've raised

Jesus from the dead the first fruits of the resurrection to come and we thank you that in trusting in him we too will be like him for eternity in glory thank you that great hope and we do pray that this truth will continue to be the first importance in our lives and transform us day by day more and more into the light of your son we pray in Jesus name amen