



Teaching God's Word to Train Disciples

Fellowship BIBLE CHURCH

Audio of Pastor Don Griffin's sermons is available at
<http://www.fellowship-katy.org>

We are here today to talk about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. There are numbers of stories regarding supposed resurrections. For example, imagine a funeral. The preacher is giving the eulogy. And suddenly, the "guest of honor" pops up out of the coffin! It really happened. Talayi George Sogcwe of South Africa decided to fake his death as a test. "I wanted to know what people say about me when I'm dead," he said. "I'm satisfied they spoke the truth about me and not lies." George says he's gonna keep the coffin for his real funeral .

Two thousand years ago, the greatest miracle of all time occurred. God in human form came to earth. Born as a baby, He grew to be the most loved, the most controversial and the most powerful Person the world has ever known. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf and even raised the dead. His greatest feat, however, was not in His healing or in His teaching. The greatest, most awesome thing He ever did was to die. That's because this man, Jesus Christ, was God's sacrifice for the sins of all mankind-the Savior of the world! But that's not where it all ends. Three days later, as He had promised, He rose from the dead! Death had been conquered, and the way was opened for you and me to enter into the presence of the holy God!

The Victory of the Resurrection

Easter

In 1874, a Baptist pastor named Robert Lowry wrote the Hymn, "He arose."

Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes,
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever, with His saints to reign.
He arose! He arose!
Hallelujah! Christ arose!

THE PROBLEM OF SIN AND DEATH

The question, "What's wrong with this world can be answered in 1 word-sin." It is because we have broken God's laws that we are in the mess we are in. Sin brings us down and ultimately leads to death. That's not something any of us like to think about. We spend our lives trying to not think about it, but we can't escape from it. Death is like that old saying, "You can run, but you can't hide."

One man illustrates sin by writing about an experience he had while standing on the edge of Niagara Falls one clear, cold March day. As some birds swooped down to snatch a drink from the clear water, the man saw birds carried over the edge of the precipice. As they dipped down for a drink, tiny droplets of ice would form on their wings. As they returned for additional drinks, more ice would weigh down their bodies until they couldn't rise above the falling waters. Flapping their wings, the birds would suddenly drop over the falls. That's a good picture of sin. It forms itself on our lives in layers until it finally takes us over the falls of death. The question is, what are we going to do about it?

THE SEARCH FOR A CURE

A patient is told by a doctor that she has a rare disease which will be fatal unless she takes a specific injection within the next 24 hours. Panic-stricken, she rolls up her sleeve to get the shot. At that mo-

ment, another doctor rushes into the room. "Wait!" he shouts. "You've misdiagnosed her! If you give her that injection, she'll die in 24 hours!" The patient nearly faints. What should she do? Where should she look for an answer? Where do people in our society look for the cure for sin?

1. Some people look to opinion

By human opinion, I mean people figure it all out for themselves. That's scary because human knowledge is constantly changing. For example, the average lifespan of a science textbook is 18 months. After that, it is out of date.

Lord Kelvin, a British scientist in 1899 said, "Radio has no future. Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible. X-rays will prove to be a hoax."

In 1943, Thomas J. Watson, president of IBM, said: "I think there's a world market for about five computers."

In 1946, Daryl F. Zanuck, head of 20th-Century Fox, said: "TV won't be able to hold onto any market it captures after the first six months. People will soon get tired of staring at a plywood box every night." Human opinion is not something you want to base your eternity on.

2. Some look to religion

I found a site on the internet that led you through a series of questions in order to choose your own god and religion. Just build your own God, your own belief system. The prevailing opinion about those religious groups is that one is as good as any other. That's not true. When there are multiple choices that contradict one another, all of them cannot be right. Somebody has to be wrong.

3. Some don't look at all

Everyone has the disease of sin, but we try to avoid thinking about it. We don't usually take walks in cemeteries. We prefer weddings to funerals. We do all we can to avoid "eye contact" with death.

The great preacher Charles Spurgeon, made the following observation. He said, "We admit that we shall die, but not so soon as to make it a pressing matter.

We imagine that we are not within measurable distance of the tomb. Even the oldest man gives himself a little longer lease, and when he has past his 80 years, we have seen him hugging life with as much tenacity as if he had just commenced it. Death will not spare us because we avoid it. We are deceived if we think that by ignoring death we postpone death."

Don Carter describes the modern mood about death as "Living life as though death were not waiting for us at the end." That is the modern mood concerning death, but it is not the way the Bible looks at death. You could take your Bible right now and randomly open it to any place, and you would not be far from some reference and reminder of death.

GOD'S PROVISION OF A CURE

There is no way for us to really understand death until we understand its theological significance. The theological significance of death is that it is God's just punishment for our sin. The problem is that our culture has redefined sin as something less than it is. Sin is often seen as a weakness, a mistake or even something unavoidable.

Sin is described as "rebellion against God's rule, missing the mark God set us to aim at, offending God's purity. Sin is a spirit of fighting God in order to play God." Death is God's just judgment for sin.

Easter does more than remind us of the reality of sin and death. Easter reminds us of the fact that God has made a way for our sins to be forgiven through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When I was growing up, I had a very large extended family. It is still large, but not nearly as large as it used to be. That's because many of my relatives have died. Time and time again, I have gone to the funeral home and I have seen them buried. The lord's death on the cross tells us that sin and death do not have the final word. The lord's death on the cross for us is the final word, and it is the only way to receive forgiveness of sins.

In John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the way; the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

1. Jesus said “I am the way

A story is told of a missionary traveling to a remote village. He was given a guide to take him there because they had to walk through the jungle. As they started their journey, the path was clear and easy to follow. But then it vanished and the guide had to cut through the vines and the thick undergrowth with his machete. The missionary got nervous and asked, “Where’s the path?” To which the native replied, “I am the path. Just follow me”

2. Jesus said “I am the truth.

Jesus rises above our cultural confusion and shouts out, “I am the truth. Truth is not something that is determined by how you feel about something, nor does it change with cultures. Truth is what God has said.

3. Jesus said “I am the life.”

All through the gospel of John, John speaks about spiritual life. Just as death brings separation from God, so life brings fellowship with God.

1 John 5:11-12 And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. So whoever has God's Son has life; whoever does not have his Son does not have life.

THE PROOF OF WHO JESUS WAS

Throughout history, God used men called prophets to give His message to His people. Sometimes these men gave people a message concerning their own time. Sometimes they gave a message concerning something that would take place in the future. Many of these men foretold of a coming Deliverer, a Savior.

Romans 1:1-4 says, “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.” When God raised Jesus from dead, said, “This is the One.”

Since the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the facts of the story have been studied over and over again. The resurrection of Christ has been placed

under the microscope of secular scholarship for over 2000 years in hopes of finding something to discredit Christianity. Examining the evidence of the resurrection is a dangerous thing for those who don’t want to believe.

Josh McDowell, a former skeptic, says in one of his books, "After more than 700 hours of studying this subject and thoroughly investigating it's foundation I have come to the conclusion that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most wicked, vicious, heartless hoax ever forced on the minds of men, or it is the most fantastic fact in history."

Sir Lionel Luckhoo, who died at the age of 83, was listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the world's most successful trial lawyer, with 245 consecutive successful defenses in murder cases. Known as the "Perry Mason of the Caribbean", Luckhoo was also a highly respected High Commissioner in London for both Guyana and Barbados, a candidate for prime minister and knighted twice by the queen of England. He

examined the evidence for Christ's resurrection and gave his life to Christ.

Many years ago another brilliant attorney named Frank Morrison decided he would disprove on legal ground the doctrine of the resurrection. And so from a scientific and legal point of view he studied all the evidence for the resurrection. When he had studied all of it he became a Christian. As he studied the evidence with an open mind he was convinced beyond any shadow of doubt that Jesus had risen from the dead. So he wrote a book called, "Who Moved the Stone?" It's his testimony about how he, an atheist, came to Christ because of the proofs of the resurrection.

1. THE EMPTY TOMB

Whether someone is a secular historian or a Christian historian, they agree on one fact. The tomb of Jesus is empty. We know that after the crucifixion, the religious leaders asked the roman government to

make the tomb of Jesus safe from disturbance. The Romans agreed and put in the entranceway a huge boulder. Large stones weighing approximately two tons were normally rolled (by means of levers) against a tomb entrance.

They put the roman seal on the rock itself signifying that no one was to disturb it. Anyone disturbing the rock would be automatically executed by crucifixion upside down. In addition to all of that, they had the tomb guarded by roman soldiers. How was the boulder removed, and where did the body of Jesus go? Neither the roman government or the Jewish leaders wanted the body to come out of the tomb because they knew that Jesus claimed he would rise from the dead, and they didn't want anyone to think he had really done so. The only ones they would want the body out of the grave would be the disciples, and they had no power to fight the roman soldiers who had been trained for battle since their youth. The Roman guards fled. According to roman law, they would have been put to death for deserting their post.

2. THE EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS

Another thing that historians, whether they are Christian or are secular, agree upon is that the early Christian movement began because the disciples were convinced that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. When studying an event in history, it is important to know whether enough people were alive when the facts about the event were published. If the number of eyewitnesses is substantial, the event can be regarded as fairly well established. For instance, if we all witness a murder today, police report tomorrow cannot tell us it didn't happen because we saw it happen. At least Five hundred and fifteen eye witnesses attest to Christ's resurrection.

If you're not a Christian, you don't have a lot of options to choose from. One of the primary explanations from the secular world is that the disciples and those who thought they saw Jesus were only hallucinating. The problem with that theory is that it is scientifically impossible that so many people would have the same hallucination at one time.

3. THE TRANSFORMED LIVES OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS

Many of the early disciples gave their lives in the arenas and were eaten by lions. They were put to death and burned as human torches in Caesar's gardens. A man might die for what he thinks is true, but no man will die for what he knows to be a lie. These men knew that Jesus had risen from the dead.

The transformed lives of people from over the face of the earth who follow Jesus Christ and give their lives for him are a living testimony that Jesus is alive and out of that grave.

4. THE CONTINUING MIRACLE OF CHRISTIANITY

Throughout the years, faith in Christ has continued to change people's lives. People have found answers to their problems and have been given a new life to live. When Jesus died, He not only gave us the ability to be forgiven, He also gave us the ability to live a different kind of life. It is a life of progressively growing more like Him. And as we grow like Him, life gets better and better.

John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

Life lived to its fullest extent. That's what God wants, and that is the message of Easter-fullness of life now and fullness of life through eternity. We just have to choose it.

ACTION POINTS

1. If you're not a Christian, be willing to study the evidence

I'm amazed at how many people are not willing to study what they don't want to believe. Truth will not

cease to be truth because you will not acknowledge it. God will continue to be god, and his law will continue to be true. And ultimately, you will suffer the consequences.

2. If you are a Christian, know what it is that you believe and why you believe it

You ought to be able to explain to people the evidence so that they also may see the light and be born into god's kingdom.

3. Don't throw away what lasts forever in order to keep what will soon perish

The story is told about the army of Alexander the Great invading Persia. As they swept across the Empire, the soldiers went through the villages and cities, taking whatever they wanted. Some of them entered the palace of Darius, and one soldier found an attractive leather bag. He looked inside and discovered the crown jewels of Persia. But being ignorant of the value of precious stones, the soldier looked at them for a moment and concluded that they were simply worthless, shiny rocks. So he dumped them out on a pile of rubbish, but he kept the leather bag. He was seen time and time again, carrying his prized treasure, a leather bag, and boasting of the attractive container in which he carried his food. So many times people clutch the bag of pleasure and pursue those things that bring only momentary gratification. How many times have we grabbed the material things of the world? And all the time, we ignore the jewels that come from walking in God's will-the only thing that will really give life the fulfillment we are looking for.