

# **The Resurrection and Our Future**

Pastor Cliff Bergman - Pinawa Alliance Church

Website: [PinawaAlliance.com](http://PinawaAlliance.com)

Email: [office@PinawaAlliance.com](mailto:office@PinawaAlliance.com)

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John 20.1 – 29; 21.1-14

Some of you may have had surgery or a medical procedure which necessitated being given an anesthetic. The surgery may have been very serious and invasive. I know many people who have had open heart surgery – one of them had eight bypasses if I remember correctly. When people move forward with surgery, they entrust their life to the surgeon and his or her medical team. They are confident when they are put out, that they will awake again and will have improved health.

Life is filled with decisions based on the information people have and what they believe to be true. Most decisions are not nearly as serious as weighing the benefits of going ahead with heart surgery or not. However, there is one decision that all people make which greatly eclipses it. It is the choice of what to do with Jesus Christ, namely, His invitation to believe in Him and receive His offer of salvation from sin and the gift of eternal life, or not. Those who choose to place their hope in Jesus Christ, not only have the benefit of a relationship with Him during their years on earth, but they are confident when they physically die, that the angels will transport them to heaven where they will spend eternity together with God, the angels, and the redeemed from every age. They believe they will one day be an occupant in the New Heaven and the New Earth where God will be their God and they will be among His people in the fullest sense.

Those who ignore or reject Jesus' offer of eternal life hold to a vastly different view. They have come to a very different conclusion about what to believe. Some contend there is no life after death, so it doesn't really matter what one believes. Others think there are many ways to get to heaven besides trusting in Jesus Christ. Most of those ways consist of a variation of religious ceremonies and self-effort. I have visited with people who were on the threshold of death and who were confident they were ready for eternity even though their beliefs differed greatly from what is found in the Bible.

The point is everyone decides whether there is life after death and for those who believe there is, how to be a part of the place we refer to as heaven. Everyone isn't only staking their earthly life on being right, but more importantly, all of eternity. This isn't like deciding whether to buy this brand of car or that brand in which case if you chose poorly, you could learn from your error and correct it with the next vehicle. In this case, we only have one life and the decision of whether to believe what Jesus said, or to reject it, determines the rest of lives. Therefore, in light of the gravity of the decision, we better assess the information available to us correctly because when we breathe our last breath on earth, it will determine where we go after that.

You may think this is a strange topic for Easter Sunday, but not at all, because the credibility of our trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior and our eternal relationship with Him hinges on the events

which happened on a handful of days nearly 2,000 years ago which we focus on at Easter. Those events are central to the hope people who are followers of Jesus Christ hold on to. Consequently, those events which culminated some 2,000 years ago on the Sunday we call Easter Sunday are not only pivotal for followers of Christ, but for everyone who rejects Him as well. The stakes are much higher than trusting one's life to a surgeon and his or her medical team – in this case the stakes couldn't be higher – they are for eternity!

Last Sunday we considered the sixth of Jesus' great *I AM* declarations. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (**John 14:6**, ESV). If you genuinely believe what Jesus said, namely that He is the way, and the truth, and the life, and that there is no other way to the Father except through Him, then you have decided that you will die holding on to those convictions. The trustworthiness of all the claims Jesus made about Who He is and the promises He offers to those who believe in Him are directly tied to His death on the cross, and the validity of His death on the cross, is dependent on His resurrection. Everything hinges on the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

### Jesus' Claimed He Would be Resurrected

Underpinning Jesus' claims to be the *Bread of Life*; the *Light of the World*; the *Door of the Sheep*; the *Good Shepherd*; the *Resurrection and the Life*; the *Way, the Truth, and the Life* and that no one comes to the Father but by Him, is His unequivocal claim that He would be crucified and would die, and three days later He would be resurrected from the dead.

**Mark 8:31** (ESV) <sup>31</sup>And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, **and after three days rise again.**

**Mark 10:33–34** (ESV) <sup>33</sup>saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. <sup>34</sup>And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. **And after three days he will rise.**"

**John 2:18–22** (ESV) <sup>18</sup>So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" <sup>19</sup>Jesus answered them, "**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**" <sup>20</sup>The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" <sup>21</sup>But he was speaking about the temple of his body. <sup>22</sup>When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

**Luke 18:31–33** (ESV) <sup>31</sup>And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. <sup>32</sup>For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. <sup>33</sup>And after flogging him, they will kill him, **and on the third day he will rise.**"

While Jesus' disciples did not grasp the meaning of what Jesus told them about being resurrected, somehow the religious leaders did. So much so that after Jesus died and was buried, they arranged to have men guard His tomb lest someone steal His body and claim He had been resurrected.

**Mat 27:62-64** The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

When one reads the claims Jesus made that are found in the Gospels, there is no doubt about what He believed. Not only did Jesus claim He would be resurrected, but He was!

### Evidence Supporting the Resurrection of Jesus

It is not possible for me to cover all the evidence supporting the resurrection of Jesus nor to answer all the questions people might raise. Let me encourage those who want to probe deeper into the details of the resurrection to read *The Case for Christ* written by Lee Strobel who investigated the legitimacy of the evidence related to the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

Since we have been studying the *Gospel of John*, let's begin there. The account in John 20 focuses on the encounters of Mary Magdalene, Peter and John.

**John 20:1–10** (ESV) <sup>1</sup>Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. <sup>2</sup>So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." <sup>3</sup>So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. <sup>4</sup>Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup>And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup>Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, <sup>7</sup>and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup>Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; <sup>9</sup>for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup>Then the disciples went back to their homes.

Shortly afterwards Jesus appeared to Mary:

**John 20:11–16** (ESV) <sup>11</sup>But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. <sup>12</sup>And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. <sup>13</sup>They said to her, "Woman, why are you

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<sup>1</sup> Lee Strobel, *The Case For Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan, 1998)

weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” <sup>14</sup>Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup>Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” <sup>16</sup>Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).

And that was followed by Jesus’ appearance to the disciples with the exception of Thomas.

**John 20:19–20** (ESV) <sup>19</sup>On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” <sup>20</sup>When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

For some unknown reason, Thomas, was not there that evening.

**John 20:24** (ESV) <sup>24</sup>Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.

Can you imagine the excitement as the disciples shared the news with Thomas? But instead of joining them in their excitement, Thomas replied with an outrageous demand,

**John 20:25** (ESV) <sup>25</sup>So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

Despite the testimony of the ten, he was not going to be fooled, as he obviously thought they were. His unbelief earned Thomas the nickname, “*Doubting Thomas*.” My immediate inclination is to say, “*How could you Thomas? Why would you doubt your fellow disciples? Besides, if you stop and think for a moment, you knew Jesus said He was going to rise from the dead, even the Jewish leaders understood that claim.*” But then I think about my own skeptical mind and my expectation of proof and conclude I would have likely done the same as Thomas. I would have wanted proof; to see for myself – wouldn’t you? Thomas became our investigator; the one who verified the evidence of Jesus’ resurrection; the one who checked the validity of Jesus’ claim; the one who followed through with, “**I need to know for sure!**” It is rather interesting that Jesus made Thomas go for a whole week with his skepticism – who knows what went through Thomas’ mind during those eight days – perhaps he was a bit sheepish and embarrassed with his doubts and maybe he became convinced through his interaction with the other disciples that Jesus had in fact been raised and hoped that everyone would forget about his doubts and his demand for verification. When the week was over, Thomas saw the evidence he asked for,

**John 20:26–29** (ESV) <sup>26</sup>Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” <sup>27</sup>Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” <sup>28</sup>Thomas answered

him, “My Lord and my God!” <sup>29</sup>Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

We are among those who have not yet personally seen the hands and side of Jesus, but we take the word of Thomas and the other ten, and one day we too will see for ourselves. But there is other evidence! Don’t forget the guards. They had been posted to make sure no one stole Jesus’ body; but they were no match for the angel. They could not keep Jesus from physically rising from the dead or the angel from opening the tomb.

**Matthew 28:2–4** (ESV) <sup>2</sup>And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup>His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup>And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.

All that action took the guards by surprise and got their attention – can you imagine their shock as this unfolded? Once they gained their composure, they went to tell the chief priests what had transpired.

**Matthew 28:11–15** (ESV) <sup>11</sup>While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. <sup>12</sup>And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers <sup>13</sup>and said, “Tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ <sup>14</sup>And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” <sup>15</sup>So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

Wow! Rather than accept the evidence of the resurrection and what it meant, the chief priests doubled down and entrenched their unbelief and bought off the guards thinking that would change what had taken place. What an opportunity the religious leaders let slip through their fingers! An opportunity to be rescued from their unbelief and accept the very sign they sought for and believe – but they ignored the opportunity! Remember the demand of the religious elite. “What sign do you show us for doing these things?” <sup>19</sup>Jesus answered them, “**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**” (**John 2:18–19**, ESV).

1 Corinthians 15 provides a summary of the resurrection and the implications of it. Having reminded his readers “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” (**1 Corinthians 15:1–4**, ESV), Paul went on to list some of the witnesses who saw Christ in His resurrected body. He began with Peter and then the other disciples (**1 Co 15:5**). It should be noted that history tells us that of the twelve disciples, all were martyred for their faith except John. It is inconceivable they would have willingly died in a horrific manner unless they knew without a doubt the resurrection was real. It is worth noting that people do not die for something they know is false. Paul then pointed out that Jesus appeared to more than 500 at a single time, most of whom were still alive when he wrote his letter to the Corinthians (**1 Co 15:6**).

Let me conclude with

## The Significance of Jesus' Resurrection

There are only two possibilities. Either Jesus was resurrected from the dead and is alive or He remained dead in the grave. There are no other options.

The implications for those possibilities are obvious:

1. If He was not raised from the dead, then belief in Jesus Christ for salvation is totally pointless.

**1 Corinthians 15:13–14** (ESV) <sup>13</sup>But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. <sup>14</sup>And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

**1 Corinthians 15:17–18** (ESV) <sup>17</sup>And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup>Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

2. On the other hand, if He was raised from the dead as He claimed He would be, and which is verified by the evidence, that means all Jesus' claims are valid. All His declarations are true including, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (**John 14:6**, ESV). Thus, all whose faith and trust is in Jesus Christ for their salvation can be sure of this – the moment after you breath your last breath on earth, the next one will be in heaven face to face with God.

It also means that for those who are still living but have not trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation from their sins and His gift of eternal life, it is not too late to do so. His invitation to believe remains valid. Everyone chooses whether they will believe Jesus' claims and trust in Him for their salvation, or carelessly dismiss those claims and the supporting evidence.

**John 3:16** (ESV) <sup>16</sup>"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

**Romans 10:13** (ESV) <sup>13</sup>For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

If anyone reading this has not personally turned to Jesus for forgiveness of their sins and decided to trust in Him for salvation, do so today. Click on the following link on our website for an overview of trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation.

<https://pinawaalliance.com/resources/how-to-have-a-personal-relationship-with-god/>

The resurrection of Jesus Christ validates the claims of Christ and provides assurance to all who are trusting in Him for their salvation that their future is secure!

**He's Alive** - Don Francisco (With on-screen lyrics)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70qk6tLHht4&ab\\_channel=ExtendedLifeWorship](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70qk6tLHht4&ab_channel=ExtendedLifeWorship)

**Christ the Lord Is Risen Today** (Grace Community Church) (With on-screen lyrics)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSs4\\_vc0pq0&ab\\_channel=MartijndeGroot](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSs4_vc0pq0&ab_channel=MartijndeGroot)