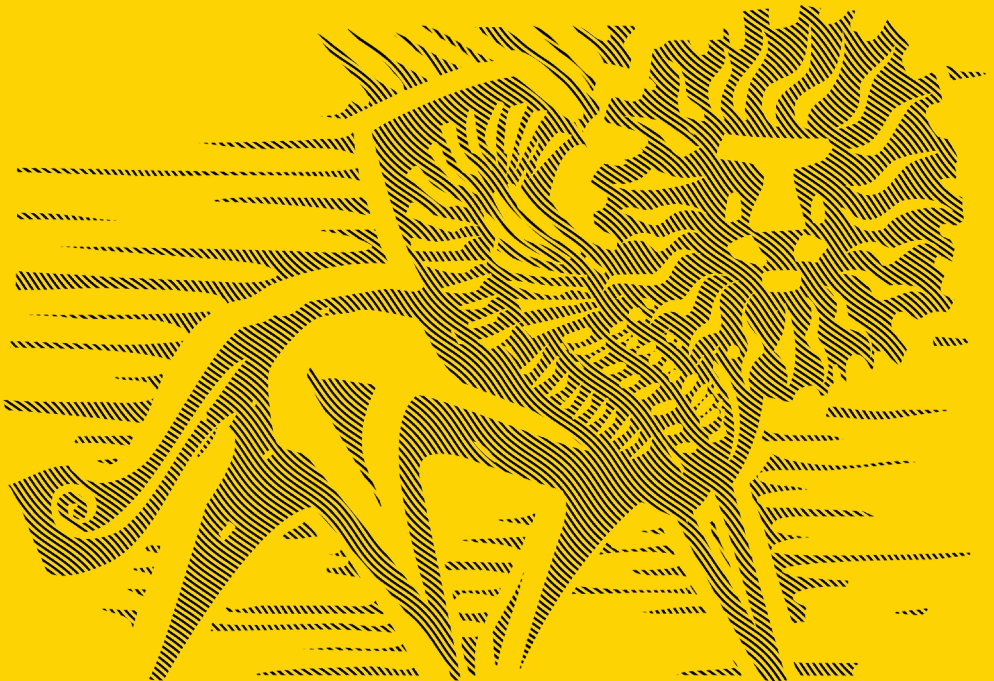


UNDERSTANDING FAITH

Why do we Celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus?

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WHY DO WE CELEBRATE THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS?

Introduction

This tract is not intended to debate the **historical question** of whether Jesus rose from the dead. I am personally convinced that He did, and that there is strong evidence to support this belief, but the answer to that question is for another time.

Neither will it attempt to explain **how the resurrection happened**. The rising of Jesus was an act of God's power and love, a mystery that ultimately lies beyond our full understanding.

Nor is this asking the question **what happened?** Beautiful and life giving accounts can be found in the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John—the earliest witnesses to these events.

Instead, we turn our hearts to the question:

Why do Christians joyfully proclaim at Easter,

“Christ is risen - He is risen indeed, alleluia”?

What does the resurrection mean for us today, and why does it matter so profoundly?

Why do we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus?

To reflect on this, I have set out five key reasons that help us see the lasting hope and significance of the resurrection.

My prayer is that these thoughts will strengthen faith, deepen joy, and help us share the good news at the heart of Easter and the Christian life.

Michael

BEFORE WE CONTINUE READ THE RESURRECTION STORY.

THIS IS THE VERSION FROM JOHN'S GOSPEL CHAPTER 20 (N.I.V.)

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus

standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (*which means "Teacher"*).

Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.



WE SHOULD CELEBRATE THE RESURRECTION. BECAUSE CELEBRATION IS UPLIFTING.

In moments of celebration, our responses often come from the heart rather than the head. I have seen this time and again. I am a lifelong supporter of Sheffield Wednesday, through more than sixty years of mixed fortunes I have been to many matches.

Picture a match against Sheffield United: the game has been close, the minutes have slipped away, and then - at the very end - Wednesday score. No one remains seated with folded arms saying

“Oh that was really good” - “Oh well played chaps - that was a jolly good move”.

The joy spills out. The crowd rises as one. Celebration simply happens.

This tells us something important about who we are. We are made to rejoice. And if such unguarded joy can be stirred by a football match, how much more should our hearts respond to the resurrection.

The resurrection is no small triumph. It is the turning point of history. The stone is rolled away. Jesus, who was seen to die, is alive. Death does not have the final word; love does.

So our response is not cautious or restrained, but full of gratitude and hope. Like a shout rising from the terraces, our proclamation is joyful and confident:

**Alleluia! Christ is Risen!
He is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

WE SHOULD CELEBRATE THE RESURRECTION. BECAUSE A TERRIBLE TRAGEDY IS TRANSFORMED

On that first Easter morning, a moment of deep tragedy begins to give way to hope. A terrible tragedy is transformed into something entirely new on that first Easter morning.

Peter, who had followed Jesus faithfully throughout His ministry, denied Him at the end and was left defeated.

Mary Magdalene, whose life had been transformed by Jesus, watched Him die and came to the tomb expecting only to anoint a body.

The disciples were devastated and confused; many had deserted Him in his last hours. Their hopes seemed shattered. Had they believed in vain? Had evil finally triumphed over goodness and godliness?

Then comes the triumphant declaration:

“He is not here; He is risen.”

(Luke 24 v6)

As Peter and Mary return from the tomb, the tragedy of Good Friday is transformed into the joy of Easter. This turning point speaks not only to their experience, but to ours. All of us face painful and difficult situations. Some resolve themselves; others require us to confront our limits and abandon our own plans. Yet Easter proclaims that even the darkest moments are not final—the stone is rolled away.

Scripture echoes this longing for justice:

“LORD, how long shall the wicked triumph?”

(Psalm 94:3).

We live in an age marked by war and declining moral values. Into this world of disorder and evil, the empty tomb declares that truth, love,

goodness, and life will ultimately prevail.

The resurrection testifies to the transforming power of a living Saviour. His gospel will endure, and His purposes will be fulfilled. The empty tomb also affirms His promised return, when He will finally overcome evil and establish righteousness. As revealed to John:

“I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and hell”

(Rev. 1:18)

Incredible transformation of us, our situations and eternity are promised through the resurrection of Jesus.

WE SHOULD CELEBRATE THE RESURRECTION. BECAUSE JESUS TRULY IS GOD'S SON

In Holy Week we walk with Jesus from Thursday evening and his betrayal to Friday, His trial and the Cross. Jesus is tortured and dies a horrible death. On Saturday His corpse rests in a borrowed tomb. It is a story of his suffering and death. Horrible but a death which takes on an amazing saving significance because of Easter Sunday. We speak with confidence about who Jesus is because we do so in the light of Easter: He is risen and we now see the God who lived with us and for us.

Without the resurrection, Jesus might be remembered as a gifted teacher - one who told powerful stories.

Before the resurrection He may be remembered as one who healed the sick, performed miraculous acts of compassion, and gathered people around Him.

A large proportion of the Gospels deal with the final week of the life of Jesus, his rejection, and how he died. Had that been the final word, Jesus might have faded into history as a good man whose life ended in tragedy. But death was not the final word. The stone was rolled away. The tomb was empty. And because of the resurrection, we return to the Gospel with renewed eyes and open hearts. We look back at the life of Jesus through lens of the Resurrection.

In the light of the resurrection, the stories are no longer just wise teachings; they are God speaking to us.

The miracles are no longer just remarkable events; they are signs of God's loving action in the world.

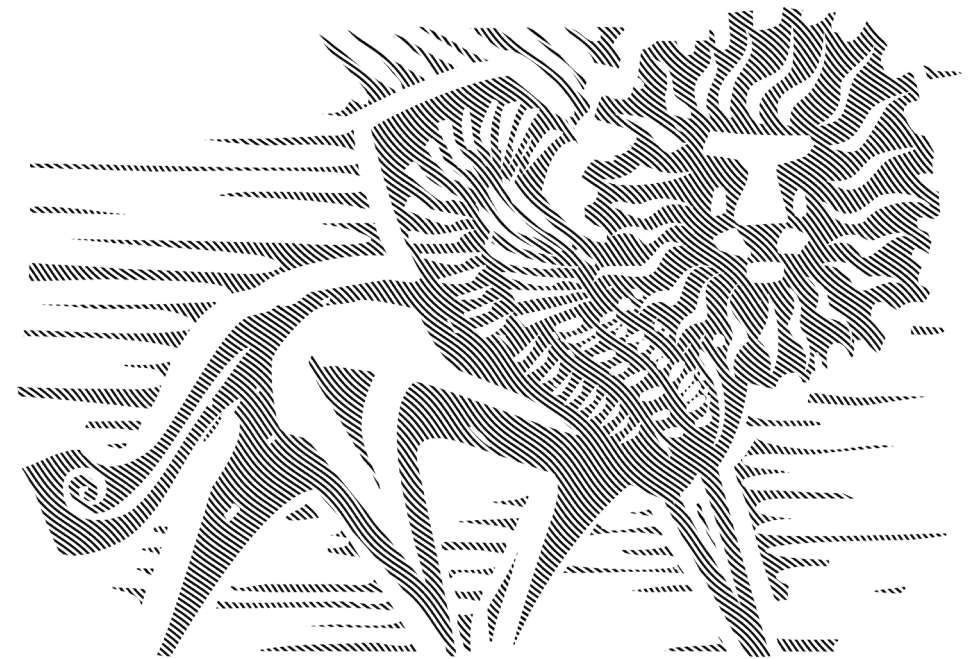
And the followers of Jesus are not simply students of an idea, but people who encountered God sharing fully in our humanity.

At Easter the Church gathers to worship the living God, revealed to us in Jesus Christ. We celebrate, we proclaim, and we trust - not because everything is easy or clear- but because we can now speak of God living with us.

As the apostle Paul reminds us,

“without the resurrection our faith would be empty. But because Christ has been raised, our faith is alive, and so is our hope.”

1 Corinthians 15 v 17



WE SHOULD CELEBRATE THE RESURRECTION. BECAUSE DEATH IS DEAD

As a Christian I know my ultimate destination; I hold the hope that my journey leads to being with Jesus forever in a world made new. This hope does not deny the pain of the present, for life in this world is often marked by tears and deep sadness. Death carries a real sting because love binds us to one another and makes loss so painful. Yet even in sorrow, we trust that Jesus rose first, a prototype, showing us the way through death and into new life, and giving us hope that we too will one day be raised and restored.

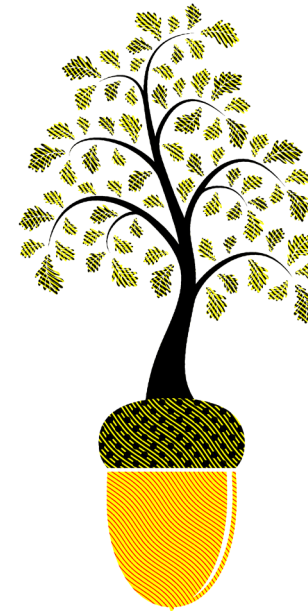
This is a paraphrase of *1 Corinthians 15 v35 ff* by Trevor Dennis from his book *“Book of Books”*. It captures superbly what we believe about the resurrection of the dead.

Christ was raised from the dead. So we will be raised from the dead also. But someone will ask “how are the dead raised?” “What kind of body do they have?”

I’ll tell you, except I can’t tell you, because it is beyond my imagining.

You know when you put a seed in the ground. It’s a tiny thing, isn’t it? If you didn’t know, when you look at the seed in your hand, you would never guess that the plant would grow from it, a stalk of wheat, perhaps, or a flower, or a great tree. You can never guess a poppy from its tiny seed, or an oak tree from looking at an acorn.

When we die, we are rather like a seed. A real seed splits apart in the soil, and a fresh plant



grows from it. After we die we emerge, as Jesus did after his death, as a new creature. And yet we will still be ourselves. You don’t get poppies from acorns, or oak trees from poppy seeds.

We are poor weak things, and we all die. But you should see us when God has raised us from the dead! We will have an honour, a dignity, a power and the glory we never dreamed of, and death will have no more hold over us.

After writing this passage Paul shouts out a cry of victory:

Death has been swallowed up in victory, where O death is your victory?

Where O death is your sting?

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. BUT thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

(1 Cor 15 v55-56)

WE SHOULD CELEBRATE THE RESURRECTION. JESUS IS ALIVE NOW AND WE CAN KNOW HIM IN OUR HEARTS TODAY.

A missionary once shared the story of a Muslim man in Africa who came to faith in Christ. When his friends asked what had led him to become a Christian, he responded with a simple but striking image:

“Imagine coming to a fork in the road, uncertain which way to go, and finding two guides there - one dead and one alive. Which would you turn to for direction?”

For him, the answer was unmistakable. He placed his trust in Jesus because Jesus is alive.

At the heart of Christian faith lies not simply devotion to a historical figure, but a living relationship with the risen Christ. Christians do not speak of Jesus as someone who belongs only to the past, but as one who is present and active among his people today. Although he is no longer seen walking among us in a physical sense, he is encountered in quieter and deeper ways: in prayer, in worship, and in the sharing of bread and wine.

Christ’s presence is also recognised in the ordinary, faithful acts of love that sustain human life. He is glimpsed in the care of a nurse sitting patiently with someone at the end of their life, in kindness offered to those who are weary or discouraged, and in the small gestures that remind people they are not alone. In such moments, hope is renewed and compassion takes root.

Christ’s presence is found in the deepest reaches of our soul. In the good thoughts we have, the words He whispers in our ears, and the deep peace He brings us.

Jesus’ promise to us comes as the last words of Matthew’s Gospel.,

“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age,”

(Matthew 28 v20)

This promise continues to shape and sustain Christian faith. It is this assurance of his abiding presence that gives comfort in sorrow, strength in uncertainty, and confidence for the journey ahead. Christians affirm, quite simply, that Jesus lives—and that he continues to walk with his people still.

INVITATION

I finish with an invitation to join the millions of and millions of people who since the Resurrection who have had their lives change by the living Jesus. Open your hearts to his living presence and love and ask him to live with you and for you to live in Him.

A PRAYER:

**Father,
prepare my heart to celebrate the joy of Easter with gratitude and excitement. Let my spirit rejoice in the miracle of Christ’s resurrection.
Remove every distraction and fill my heart with gladness. Help me celebrate Easter not just outwardly, but with sincere joy that comes from knowing the risen Saviour. In Jesus’ name, Amen.**

