

Responding to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

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Date: 04 April 2021

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[0 : 00] I noticed how some of life's best lessons are taught by children. We sort of observe them or hear them say funny things, cute things.

And even when it comes to spiritual things, children have a way of teaching us, including some of the important truths about the resurrection.

A Sunday school teacher gave her class of first graders one year before Easter, the Sunday before Easter, she gave each one an egg, a plastic egg, and told them, now you go home and you put something in that egg that will help us understand the Easter story and bring it back next week and open it up and tell us about it.

Well, the children got real excited. They each got their egg and next Sunday came and one child brought an egg and opened it up and there was a picture of a butterfly.

This little girl said, this is a picture of the new life that we have in Jesus. Good, the teacher said.

Well, another child brought an egg and shook it first, had a little stone in it.

[1 : 22] She opened it up and she said, this is the stone that the angels rolled away to show that the tomb was empty.

Good. Great job. Well, there was one little boy who was very shy. He didn't participate much. He laid his egg on the table and didn't say a word, didn't do anything to it.

Well, the teacher opened it and it was empty. Well, some of the other children complained, he's not participating. Why didn't he do what he was supposed to do? And then he softly said, I did too.

My egg is the tomb of Jesus. There ain't nothing in it. That's the point, isn't there? That's the message of Easter.

There ain't nothing in the tomb of Jesus because he arose from the dead. I want us to look at Matthew's account of that story. Matthew chapter 28.

[2 : 25] At the end of all the gospels, we read about the death and resurrection of Jesus. I would encourage you to take time. There's just four, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, to go home today and read.

Because each one gives a little different perspective. Things that they notice or things that happened uniquely to them. We're going to read from Matthew's perspective.

Matthew 28, beginning in verse 1. Now, after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, the first day of the week being Sunday, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

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. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow.

And for fear of him, the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.

[3 : 37] He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead.

And behold, he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him. See, I have told you. So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples.

And behold, Jesus met them and said, greetings. And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, do not be afraid.

Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee and there they will see me. While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place.

And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, tell people.

[4 : 43] His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep. And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.

So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day. Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

And when they saw him, they worshipped him. But some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. I want us to note the way people responded to the resurrection of Jesus on that first Easter.

[5 : 46] And understand what we see on that first Easter is the way people still respond to him today. Let's look first, the response of denial.

That was the response of the Jewish leaders. The Jewish leaders who had demanded that Jesus be put to death. That was their way of shutting him up, getting him out of the way.

Because he was disrupting what they were doing as the people who led the common people. They were, Jesus was upsetting their plans of power and authority and privilege.

They crucified him. Well, here is what the soldiers had experienced and reported.

I want you to look at it. Verses 2 through 4. And behold, there was a great earthquake for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.

[6 : 54] His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him, the guards trembled and became like dead men. That was the experience of those seasoned Roman soldiers who didn't care a thing in the world about the Jewish religion.

Who didn't care about who was supposedly in that tomb. And certainly wouldn't have cared about just another criminal who had been executed on the cross by crucifixion.

But I want you to look at what happened. They're just there doing what they normally do. And all of a sudden there's a great earthquake. The ground moves.

Then they see an angel. Probably didn't have a clue what in the world is this. An angel appearing in brilliant light. Roll back the boulder that was covering the entrance of Jesus' tomb.

Revealing that it was empty. That Jesus' body was gone. They were so terrified. It says that they literally shook with fear.

[8 : 09] And became unresponsive. Maybe they fainted. Maybe they were just in shock. It's sort of like frozen steel. That's what they experienced.

And some of them went and told the Jewish leaders. Note the response of the Jewish leaders. Verses 11 through 13. Some of the guard went into the city.

And told the chief priests all that had taken place. And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel. They gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, tell people.

His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were sleeping. Now, the way Matthew records this. Those Jewish leaders.

They didn't ask any questions. They didn't send anyone to see what had happened at that tomb. Try to verify.

[9 : 09] Check out the facts. They ignored what the soldiers had said. Acted as if they didn't say anything.

And they devised a plan to lie and cover up what had happened. And the fact that Jesus' body was gone.

Think about it. They heard these soldiers who had no interest in the Christian faith. In this Jesus who was crucified. They heard the story of what they had felt and seen.

And all they could do was try to cover it up. They didn't consider for one moment that a miracle of resurrection had happened.

Those Jewish leaders were only concerned about preserving the status quo. Preserving their own place of authority and privilege.

[10 : 10] They had no interest in knowing the truth. Now, what about you? Do you deny the resurrection?

I truly believe that there's very few in this room who would ever think, I don't believe it at all.

Now, there may be. Some of you may have come today to be in good graces with whoever brought you. Somebody may have offered to feed you a good lunch if you came to church with them today. But you're like these Roman soldiers. You're like these Jewish leaders. You really have no interest in spiritual things, the things of God.

I want you to deny the possibility even. That what we're reading is true.

[11:17] Is the response of someone who is only concerned with the here and now. Only concerned with me and my life in this world. As if this is all that there is.

Denying the resurrection of the resurrection without ever investigating it. Studying it. Is an indication that you don't really have any interest in God.

Or in God's truth. But I want to warn you. I want to encourage you. Don't be quick to dismiss the idea that Jesus really did come back to life.

Don't be quick to dismiss the idea that there is life after death. Your eternal destiny. Will be determined by the way that you respond.

To the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In fact that's true about every single one of us in this room.

Where we spend eternity will be determined by.

[12:26] How we have responded. To the resurrected living Lord Jesus Christ. Think about it. Let's look at the second response.

That we see in this passage to the resurrection. The response of doubt. It's in verse 17. Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee. To the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

And when they saw him. They worshipped him. But some doubted. Who had doubts? Think about what you're reading there.

It appears that the phrase. They worshipped him. Refers to the eleven disciples. Who had gone to the mountain.

Where Jesus directed them. D.A. Carson says that because. Some doubted. Look at this on the screen. The implications. The implications that. More than the eleven were present.

[13:24] Carson says. Doubt about Jesus. Or about the reality of his resurrection. Does not seem appropriate. For those who truly. Worship him.

That makes sense doesn't it? So who would be the. Doubters. Well according to what we read. In the other gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

When you look at it all. Jesus' first appearance. To these disciples. Was not at Galilee. It was in Jerusalem. In fact. By the time they got to Galilee.

To see this. To hear Jesus give his. Final. Direction to them. They had seen Jesus. At least two or three times. They knew.

He'd come back to life. They had interacted with him. They truly were able. To worship him. Because they did. Believe in him. But the ones who doubted.

[14:23] And that word doubt. Can be translated here. Hesitated. Maybe they were the disciples. That this was their first. Encounter. With the risen Lord.

Who was the most. Famous doubter. Of Jesus' resurrection. Thomas. That's where you get the phrase. Doubting Thomas. Right?

Well we read in John chapter 20. That he was not present. When Jesus first appeared. To the other disciples. And that's when he. Doubted. What they were saying.

Hesitant. To believe. Believe. But. Later on. He saw Jesus. And he did believe. I want to ask you. Are you a doubter?

I want to. I want us to think about this. A little bit differently. You could be a doubter. But never really deny. The reality of the resurrection.

[15:26] You might even say. You know. I believe what the Bible says. I believe what the Bible says. About the facts. About Jesus' life. And death. And resurrection. But.

If you look at your life. That kind of belief. Really doesn't affect the way that you live. The word doubt.

May not be the best word for you. It may be that you believe the facts. But you're. You're hesitant. To do anything about it. You got the knowledge.

You got the. You know. The mental assent. To the facts. But you've never acted on. What you say you believe. You've hesitated.

To commit. You know. Doubting Thomas. We could call him. Hesitating Thomas. Because he was hesitant.

[16 : 25] To believe the resurrection. Are you. Are you hesitant to step on out and not just say you believe that Jesus is alive, but to show the world that you believe he's alive by obeying him, following him, loving him, seeking to please him?

You know, doubting Thomas didn't stay that way. He went on to become devoted Thomas, who made this statement.

When he finally saw Jesus and believed, he looked at Jesus and declared, my Lord and my God. He truly embraced Jesus as his Lord, his God.

If Jesus is truly your Lord and your God, you've got to stop hesitating and get serious about being a devoted follower of Jesus, which is the next response I want us to look at, the response of devotion. Two women were the first to see the risen Lord, and their immediate response was to worship him. Note in verse nine, Jesus met them and said, greetings, and they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.

[18 : 03] Now, if you think about it, that sounds sort of odd, doesn't it? It sounds real odd. They took hold of his feet. Well, here's what had to have happened for that to take place.

When they saw Jesus, they immediately fell down before him in worship, or at least they got on their knees and knelt before him in worship.

Think, these women had witnessed Jesus' death on the cross. They had seen him be buried and the stone rolled in front of the tomb.

When they saw that the stone was rolled away and the tomb was empty, that Jesus was alive, they worshiped him, they touched him.

It was no dream or no vision. He was alive, literally, physically, bodily. Now, if you look on, the 11 disciples were spotted in a similar way that we've already seen.

[19 : 06] It says when they saw him, they worshiped him. Worship is the most natural response of the disciples of Jesus following his resurrection. Jesus had taught them for three years about who he was, but they never really got it.

They understood some things, but it was not until after the resurrection and they saw him that the light came on them. They understood this really is the Son of God who didn't just suffer on a cross and die and be buried.

He arose because he is God. He is my Lord and my God. Now, does your life demonstrate devotion to Christ?

Do you worship him? Have you truly, we came to this place, we call it a worship service. Have you worshiped him, praised him, thought of him, and honored him, your living Lord in this service?

Do you worship him on a regular basis when you pray? Do you as a Christian, do you pray and just worship and praise God, your heavenly Father, and Jesus, your Lord and your Savior?

[20 : 32] Do you say things about worshiping him, praising him, honoring him? Think about this. Does he see by the way you show your devotion, does Jesus see your love, your honor, your respect, your gratitude in action?

Now, this is not how it would be, but I want you to think for a moment. Jesus is in heaven at the right hand of the Father. And it's like he's watching you, and your life is like a movie.

He sees how you, you know, you are at home, at work, at school. He knows what you, what kind of things that you think and you feel. As Jesus looks at you, observes you, knows what's going on in your life, does he see that you truly are devoted to him.

You know, some of you in this room, in a good, healthy way, you are a devoted wife, husband, parent, child even, boyfriend or girlfriend.

and your spouse or your children or your parents or your boyfriend or girlfriend, they can tell someone, he or she truly is devoted to me because of what?

[22 : 20] What do you do? It's not enough just to say it, just to think it. we should express our devotion, don't we?

In various ways of actions that are loving, that show gratitude. If we are devoted to Jesus, it will come out because he's real to us.

There is a relationship there with him and relationship is essential when it comes to being rightly connected to Jesus. You know, we'll never be devoted to a stranger.

We can't be devoted to someone we have just a little bit of information about and even know it's true. I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings.

But I know some factual information about old Nate back there. I ain't devoted to you, buddy. You're a good guy.

[23 : 37] Lisa, you're a good friend of many years. But I ain't devoted to you. See, I know them. I like them.

I have a relationship with them. But it's not on the level of being devoted to them like I am to my wife, my children, my grandchildren, the closest of friends.

You see, what I'm getting at, if Jesus is truly our Lord and our Savior, we have a relationship with Him and we talk to Him, we worship Him and praise Him because we are devoted to Him.

We live our lives in a way that we try to demonstrate our love by the way that we obey Him. And that gets us to the next response of dedication or the response of dedication.

There are two responses of dedication found in this chapter. The first, look at verses 7 and 8. When the angel of the Lord told the women that Jesus had risen from the dead, they believed and immediately obeyed.

[24 : 53] Look at this. Then go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead and behold, He is going before you to Galilee. There you will see Him see how I've told you. So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell His disciples.

They haven't even seen Jesus yet. They believed the word of the angel and they were not just devoted to the living Lord, they were going to be obedient. Look at the other example.

Probably the best, most well-known statement of the resurrected Lord is what we call His great commission is at the end of this chapter. It says, And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

We cannot study the responses to the resurrection of Jesus without noting. There is a lot more to being devoted to Him than just worshiping Him.

[26 : 05] Dedication or commitment or obedience. All three words are talking about the same things. Dedication or commitment to serving the Lord is a natural outcome of being devoted to Him.

Devotedly worshiping Him. In other words, if we love Him, we'll obey Him. And Jesus said that numerous times. Are you dedicated to living under the authority of Jesus and truly serving Him in every area of your life?

Living like a faithful Christian in your home at work, school, and doing what you do is if you're doing it for the Lord. If not, will you begin today?

You know, this is a great day. A great day to get serious about showing your devotion to Jesus by dedicating yourself to actively serving Him.

And this is Easter Sunday, Resurrection Day. No better day to make a commitment. But you know, this is our first Sunday as a church family. This is our first Sunday back in what we call our normal schedule.

[27 : 26] We had an 8.30 service this morning. We had Sunday school, Bible study for everybody at 9.15, and now this service. This has been a hard, difficult, different year, hasn't it?

We've got out of a lot of our normal routine, normal good habits of public worship, coming together in Bible study with other Christians in our church.

Let's just be honest. It's been easy to stay at home a lot of times, watch the live stream, not have any responsibilities.

Now, I understand over this past year there have been some things that we haven't done and rightly so.

We have tried to use common sense, follow the guidelines of experts to keep our church families safe.

[28 : 35] Some of you, with your age and or health conditions, it was wise for you to stay out of a crowd like this. It was the right thing to do. But now that things are getting a lot better and we continue to pray that they'll eventually be back, no more pandemic, no more to worry about.

Are you going to break your bad habits? your lazy habits? Are you going to recommit to dedicated service to the Lord in and through this church and in other ways that maybe you couldn't or shouldn't have for the last year?

but the time has come or will come for some that you just got to do it. You've got to demonstrate your devotion through dedicated service.

If you truly believe that Jesus is the Son of God who died on the cross for your sins and is now risen, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords as He's called in Scripture, then the only acceptable way to respond to Him is with devotion and dedication.

We saw three weeks ago in our study of Philippians chapter 2 verses 9 through 11 that one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and we talked about that Sunday.

[30 : 22] It's so important that we do that on our own now, willingly, voluntarily. If you came into this room this morning not a believer, not trusting Jesus as your Savior and Lord, not honoring Him, but the Lord has shown you that's not the way to live, the way to live forever.

He's convicting you of your sin, calling you to change your mind. I want to encourage you to do that. Admit to God that you are not His, that there's never been true devotion or any kind of dedicated commitment.

Turn from your sin. Trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord, that He paid the penalty for your sins when He died on the cross. Call upon Him to save you and to become the true Lord, Master of your life.

You know, if we really and truly believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, I mean, if God has done a work in us to save us, regenerate us, and put His Spirit in us, we can't help but to want to be devoted to Him in worship and love and be dedicated to serving Him with the talents and gifts and abilities He has given us.

I want you to listen to the Lord and do whatever He's calling you to do that when you leave here today, you can truly celebrate the resurrection of your Lord Jesus Christ with heartfelt devotion and visible hands-on dedicated service.

[32 : 24] Let's pray together. Father, help us to see what You see in us. Father, if there are people in this room who deny the reality of the resurrection, we pray that You will show them that they're wrong.

Don't let them be content to continue to live in such denial. Open their eyes of faith to see Jesus is alive and can save them if they will call upon Him, turn from their sins and commit to Him as their Lord.

Father, if there are doubters in this room, clear up their doubts. Help them, Father, to seriously study Your Word and then confirm Your truth.

Help them to have a real faith. Father, help us all in this room to see that if we love Jesus, if He's truly our Lord and Savior, we will be devoted to Him.

We'll want to worship and praise and honor and thank our Savior and Lord. And then, Father, make it very clear to every Christian in this room that being a devoted Christian also involves being a dedicated, committed, obedient, child of God, day in and day out, in every relationship and realm of life.

[34 : 19] Help us to make the commitments, to confess the sin, to change the things in our life that needs to be changed, to leave here devoted and dedicated men and women, boys and girls of God.

Let's just in attitude of prayer listen to the Lord and respond to Him in these next few minutes so that you can leave here celebrating the resurrection this morning as this devoted, dedicated follower of Jesus.

Amen. Amen. Amen.