
Resurrection Hope

1. Intro

- Today we are looking at the topic of hope and in particular resurrection hope
- We all have hopes – don't we?
 - It doesn't matter whether you are a Christian or not ... we all have things we hope for, for the future
- What is it you hope for?
 - To be in a relationship > get married > have children
 - See kids grow up > become adults > get married > have grand children
 - Get a promotion > land the next contract
 - Make it big in your profession / industry
 - Pay off the house
 - A new car > an overseas holiday
 - A better Australia, a better future > a new Prime Minister
 - Healing of an illness
 - A happier marriage > better grades > nicer friendships
- We all have hopes > we all hope for something

- When you think about it ... the things we so often hope for are often things we are wanting in order to satisfy a deeper desire
- Whether that be ...
 - A search for significance
 - A desire for security
 - A craving for happiness
- It's true isn't it?
 - Much of what we hope for really just boils down to a wanting to be happy, secure or significant

- We chase after those desires
 - Spend money, time, energy seeking to fulfil our hopes and desires
 - Some we achieve ... others slip through our fingers ... others fade into the distance never to be realised or grasped

- And what happens when you don't achieve the things in life you hope and desire after?
- For many people ... it's leaves them with a sense of
 - Disappointment
 - Lack of contentment

- Others ... more profound impact of
 - despair
 - depression
 - divorce
 - addiction
- The truth is ... a life without Jesus Christ at the centre ... means
 - there are no guarantees around the things we hope for in life
- Life without Jesus Christ has many hopes and desires but absolutely no surety
- The very first Easter ... and in particular ... the resurrection of Jesus from the dead ... gives hope to this world that is guaranteed
 - Jesus Christ rising from the dead not only give us a hope that is sure
 - It also means that all those things we are hoping for
 - In order to fulfil our
 - search for significance
 - desire for security
 - craving for happiness ...
 - Are guaranteed to be found and fulfilled ... because of the resurrection, 2000 years ago, on that very first Easter
- This morning I want us to look at three things
 - Resurrection facts > how we can be confident the resurrection really happened
 - Resurrection significance > what does the resurrection mean for us
 - Resurrection hope > how the resurrection gives us hope

2. Resurrection Facts

- In Paul's letter to Corinthian church ... he is writing to a church he planted a few years earlier and he wants to address a number of issues that have been brought to his attention
- One is the Corinthian's confusion about the resurrection
 - So Paul writes to correct their mis-understanding about the resurrection and encourage them with the hope that the resurrection brings
- He starts saying he wants to remind them of the gospel ... the good news of Jesus ... because this is the foundation of what he will say later
 - If you are visiting today ... and you're not sure or a bit fuzzy on what Christianity is all about ... v1-4 give it to you short and sweet

- Firstly ... Paul says in v2 ...
 - *"By this gospel you are saved if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you"*
 - The Bible says *'man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment'*¹
 - But through the gospel God has provided
 - a means for mankind to be spared that judgment
 - a means to be restored in your relationship with him

- So what is this gospel that saves? Paul tells us in v3-4
 - Christ died for our sins
 - Christ was buried
 - Christ was raised to life on the third day
 - Christ appeared to many

- Here's the facts of gospel
 - These are the historical facts of what happened that very first Easter
 - And it was through this event of Christ dying on a Roman cross 2000 years ago ... that God saves us and reconciles us to him

- How is that possible?
 - v3 - *Because Christ died for our sins*
 - Jesus death wasn't just a meaningless death of a Palestinian carpenter
 - It was way more significant and cosmic than that
 - It was a sacrificial death of atonement in the place of others
 - Christ died the death we deserved to die
 - Jesus suffered so we won't have to suffer
 - Christ was rejected so we won't be rejected

- Jesus is death is not debated
 - The evidence is so strong that even atheist historian Gerd Lüdemann said Jesus death by crucifixion is "indisputable."²
 - The historicity and death of Jesus is not disputed ... it's his **resurrection** that's disputed

- And because the resurrection is such a staggering claim ... in v5-10 Paul catalogues this long list of witnesses who saw the risen Lord Jesus

¹ Hebrews 9:27

² *The Resurrection of Christ: A Historical Inquiry*, 2004, p. 50

- Peter
- 12 disciples
 - If you're a sceptic of the resurrection ... at this point you're probably thinking ...
 - "yeah, yeah ... of course the disciples are going to say they saw him risen from the dead. They had an ulterior motive ... or they were imagining it, hoping it would happen"
 - But the next few witnesses that Paul lists show Jesus resurrection was real
- 500 > Next Paul says in v6 – *"After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time,*
 - This is HUGELY significant
 - Firstly ... it shows that this is not some figment of imagination of a few fishermen experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder
 - Peter and the disciples weren't hallucinating or having a dream
 - Hallucinations and dreams occur in individual brain ... they're personal / individual experiences
 - 500 people can't hallucinate or dream the same thing
 - Secondly ... it shows the disciples weren't colluding to propagate some fabricated story
 - You might get a small group of people to lie and cover up a story
 - But its logistically impossible to get 500 people all telling the same lie, all keeping the lie and not letting the cat out of the bag
- **Illustration – Lance Armstrong**
- Famously lied black and blue about doping during his cycling career
 - But a small group of people knew the truth ... maybe 15 people (team manager, doctors, trainer, other riders)
 - He was able to perpetuate the lie ... for a while
 - But then he ticked off one of his ex-team mates ... who spilled the beans on Lance and his doping regime
 - Then one by one those in the know started telling the truth > revealing the lie
- The resurrection was not some fabricated story concocted by a few disciples to advance their political cause or career path
 - So many people had seen Jesus risen from the dead ... it was impossible for it to be a fabrication
- Thirdly, Paul says ... *most [of the 500] are still living, though some have fallen asleep."*

- In other words, he's saying ... "you can go and speak to them and they can verify the things I am saying"
- If Paul had to stand in a court of law and face charges of speaking about the resurrection ...
 - he'd be able to call a long, long list of witnesses who could verify his claim
 - the prosecution and the judge would get very bored hearing nearly 500 people saying the same thing!

- James > next Paul says Jesus also appeared to James
 - James was Jesus brother who initially didn't believe in Jesus
 - He was a sceptic > didn't think he was the Christ
 - But we know from other parts of the Bible, James became the leader of the church in Jerusalem and was later martyred by King Herod proclaiming the resurrection
 - How do you account for that?
 - Because Jesus appeared to him also

- Apostles > then he all the apostles
 - A group larger than just the 'the twelve disciples'
 - Again another group appearance

- Paul > finally Paul says Jesus appeared to me
 - Again ... this is significant ... because before Paul became a Christian ...
 - he HATED Christians
 - he HATED the idea that people were following Jesus as the Christ
 - He rounded up Christians and put them in jail and had them killed
 - In the early days of Christianity ... Paul was arch-enemy number one
 - So ... he was the last person who would want to testify to the resurrection of Jesus ...because to do so would show that all his life and all his work had been completely wrong
 - It would have been totally humiliating for Paul to turn around and admit that
 - Jesus truly was risen from the dead,
 - that he's the Christ and
 - that he is gone from being a hater to Jesus number one fan and apostle

 - It would be like Kevin Rudd saying
 - I love Malcolm Turnbull

- He's the greatest Prime Minister Australia's ever had
- I love his policies
- I love the Liberal Party and
- I'm putting my hand up to be the campaign manager at the next election
- It just wouldn't happen ... unless something extraordinary happened to fundamentally change his worldview ...
- And that's exactly what happened to Paul ... he saw the risen Lord Jesus

- **Application**

- You see the resurrection of Jesus is a truly astounding event
- And yes ... it is incomprehensible to us as to how it could happen
- And if you're here this morning and you are sceptical of the resurrection ... I get it
 - Before I became a Christian ... one of the big doubts I had ... was about the resurrection of Jesus
- The resurrection was one of the key sticking points for Chicago Tribune journalist, Lee Strobel
 - *"It was the worst news I could get as an atheist: my agnostic wife had decided to become a Christian. Two words shot through my mind. The first was an expletive; the second was "divorce."*
 - *"I decided to take my journalism and legal training and systematically investigate whether there was any credibility to Christianity."*
 - *"I quickly determined that the alleged resurrection of Jesus was the key. Anyone can claim to be divine, but if Jesus backed up his claim by returning from the dead, then that was awfully good evidence he was telling the truth."*
 - *"For nearly two years, I explored the minutia of the historical data on whether Easter was myth or reality. I didn't merely accept the New Testament at face value; I was determined only to consider facts that were well-supported historically. As my investigation unfolded, my atheism began to buckle."*
 - *"One by one, my objections evaporated. I read books by skeptics, but their counter-arguments crumbled under the weight of the historical data. No wonder atheists so often come up short in scholarly debates over the resurrection."*
 - *"In the end, after I had thoroughly investigated the matter, I reached an unexpected conclusion: it would actually take more faith to maintain my atheism than to become a follower of Jesus."*

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- *"And that's why I'm now celebrating my 34th Easter as a Christian. Not because of wishful thinking, the fear of death, or the need for a psychological crutch – but because of the facts."³*
 - Friends, you need to let the facts of the resurrection argue with you
 - You account for the facts
 - You account for the fact that hundreds of orthodox Jews were who were the last people on the planet to believe in the Son of God ... actually believed in and followed Jesus
 - You account for the fact that people saw him, sometimes hundreds at a time ... so it couldn't have been a hallucination
 - And you account for the fact that those people lived the rest of their lives and died for their belief in the resurrection ... so it couldn't have been a hoax
 - You come up with an alternative explanation for the resurrection of Jesus
 - And if you can't ... then you have no intellectual integrity to walk away from Christianity without investigating it yourself
 - Friends ... you may have doubts about the facts of Easter and in particular the resurrection
 - But, as staggering as it is ... you can't rationally dismiss the historical evidence that exists for it
 - You've either got to come up with a better rational explanation for facts of the resurrection
 - Or you have to do what Lee Strobel says and have more faith to believe it **didn't** happen ... than to actually believe it did

3. Resurrection Significance

- Paul wants to establish the historicity of the resurrection, so he can then go on and talk about the implications of the resurrection ... which he does in v12-19
- Paul wants to address the rumour that some in Corinth were saying that there's no resurrection of the dead
 - That is ... there will be no resurrection on the last day when Jesus returns
- Paul's argument is brilliant and rational
- v13 he says

³ <https://stream.org/easter-killed-atheism/>

- If there is no resurrection from the dead ... then that means Jesus was never raised
- In other words ... you can't believe in the resurrection of Jesus and then deny the resurrection on the last day
- It's a logical fallacy
- But then he goes on to outline an even greater implication of the resurrection
- He says in v14
 - If Christ has not been raised then my preaching and the preaching of all the apostles is useless ... because the resurrection has been key their message
- But more than their preaching being useless ...
 - Paul says 'your faith' is useless!
- Why? As Paul explains in v17
 - If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins
 - And those who have already died trusting in Christ are not saved at all, but lost for eternity
- What Paul is saying here is ... without the resurrection, Christianity falls like a house of cards
 - If the resurrection didn't happen, we have no hope
 - We may as well
 - Close up shop
 - I can go back to being an accountant (I might try and find something more interesting to do second time around!)
 - You can save your money
 - You can go all to the beach on Sundays ... because Christianity would be nothing
- The reason we have no hope without the resurrection is because Paul says you are still in your sins
- What does Paul mean by this?
 - It means without the resurrection Christ's death didn't do the job > it didn't atone for sin
 - This was the whole purpose of Jesus death
- If Jesus didn't rise from the dead ... and instead remained dead in the grave ...

- Then his death accomplished nothing for the forgiveness of sins
- And if Christ's death didn't achieve our forgiveness ... then we're still in our sins and under the judgment of God
- And if that were the case ... your faith would be futile
 - May as well go and eat, drink and be merry ...
 - Make the most of the remaining days you have on the earth
 - And face the inevitable when you die
- **Illustration – Set free from jail**
- If you do a crime you are sent to jail
 - Once you live out that jail term ... you're set free ... the crimes been paid for
 - How do you know the debt has been paid?
 - You're out! The door is opened!
- Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world
 - How do we know he actually paid the debt in full?
 - Because the door opened and he's out
- I don't know what you're like ... but some people like to keep their receipts
 - I don't know why?
 - Maybe it helps them sleep better at night because they know if they don't keep receipts they're afraid that someone is going to come and say "you owe me"
- Because if you don't keep your receipts and someone asks you that ...you say
 - "No I'm sure I paid that ... I'm positive I paid that ... oh my gosh I have no way of proving it."
- But some of you sleep very well because
 - if someone says to you "you owe me" ...
 - all you do is pull out the receipt and say
 - "trouble me no more! I have the receipt! The debts paid in full!"
- Paul is saying ... Jesus resurrection is like the receipt that has paid for the debt our sin
 - We can sleep well (so to speak) ... knowing for sure ... the debt of sin has been paid in full ...
 - **Why?** Because on Easter Sunday he walked out free!
 - No more to pay! ... nothing left to do!

- Christ has done it and his resurrection proves it
- The resurrection was God's way of stamping PAID IN FULL right across history so that nobody could miss it

4. Resurrection Hope

- In v19 Paul says – *"If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men."*
 - What he's saying is if Christ is not raised ... then we have
 - no hope of heaven
 - no hope of our sin being paid in full
 - no hope of eternal life
 - And no hope of anything more than this fallen world can offer us
- But because Christ **IS** risen ... then those who trust in him ... do have hope
 - And it's much more than wishful thinking hope
 - It's a sure and certain hope
 - It's a logical conclusion
- **Illustration**
- When you start seeing Weetbix ads on TV you know cricket season is here
- When you see the Jacaranda tree blossom you know summer is around the corner
- When you hear carols played in shopping centres you know Christmas is 5mths away
- And because we know Jesus Christ is risen from the dead ... we know for certain that those who are in Christ will also be raised to eternal life
 - For as Paul says in v20 ... Christ's resurrection is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep
 - Christ's resurrection ... gives us a sure and certain hope for our own resurrection to eternal life
- And friends, as we started off thinking about this, this morning ... we so badly need a hope that is certain and sure
- And here's why
- **Chariots of Fire** (significance)
- The movie Chariots of Fire ... chronicles the true story Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell who are athletes competing to run at the 1924 Paris Olympics

- Of course the story is famous for Erid Liddell who was a devout Christian refusing to race on a Sunday
- But throughout the movie there's this stark contrast between Liddell and Abrahams in their motivation for running and winning
- For Liddell it was all about running for the greater glory of God > to utilise and enjoy the gift God had given him of running fast
- But for Abrahams ... running and winning was all about justifying himself > justifying his existence > finding significance
- Towards the end of the movie, just before he is about to run the 100m Abrahams says to his friend Aubrey
 - *"I will raise my eyes and look down that corridor; 4 feet wide, with 10 lonely seconds to justify my whole existence. But WILL I?"*
- He goes on to say to his friend...
 - *"You, Aubrey, are my most complete man. You're brave, compassionate, kind: a content man. That is your secret, contentment; I am 24 and I've never known it. I'm forever in pursuit and I don't even know what I am chasing."*
- His hope was to win an Olympic gold medal and why ... to justify his existence > his hope of winning was his search for significance
 - As a result ... he had no contentment
 - He was constantly worrying if he would fulfil his hopes and therefore his search for significance
 - And it was crippling for him

- A more contemporary example comes from Ross Gittins
 - Gittins is a business and economics journalist who writes for the SMH
 - He wrote this article a number of years ago called *"You'll never be happier, but keep working at it"*
- In the article he writes
 - *"Thus we've evolved never to be completely happy (or never for long) and to quickly adapt to whatever we've managed to attain and soon be hankering after something we imagine will be better."*
 - *"Yet more empirical research tells us people believe they'll be happier in the future but seldom are, and they constantly overestimate the happiness they'll get from positive developments and underestimate their ability to adjust to negative developments"⁴*
- You see what he is saying

⁴ <http://www.smh.com.au/business/youll-never-be-happier-but-keep-working-at-it-20091002-gqh2.html>

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- We all hope for happiness ... but either we never attain it ... or if we do we desire something else we think is going to make us happy
 - And so all those things you and I hope for to do with our
 - Kids > job > health > marriage > friendships > possessions that we are seeking after
 - in order to bring us significance, security or happiness ...
 - Ultimately will leave us
 - At best ... wanting more
 - At worst ... unsatisfied, disappointed, despairing
 - So where does that leave us?
 - Are we to not hope for anything?
 - Are we to live miserable lives just waiting to see what cards life deals out to us?
 - Is there any chance of our hopes being truly fulfilled?
 - C.S. Lewis writes that if we have a desire / hope for something ... then satisfaction for that hope / desire must exist
 - If a "baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food."
 - That hunger is a desire and food its answer doesn't imply that a hungry baby will always be fed ... but it does mean that there's an actual way to satisfy the longing
 - And, for Lewis, this rule applies to all hopes and desires ... whether simple (e.g. thirst) or complex (e.g. love)
 - But that leaves us with a difficult question –
 - If we accept the premise that all our hopes and desires can indeed be satisfied ... what are we to make of those hopes and desires we have ... and yet to satisfaction is to be found on earth?
 - Lewis's answer to this question is that our hopes and desires were never meant to be satisfied by earthly pleasures alone
 - Instead, they lead us to something "further up and further in," ... to the true source of satisfaction and fulfilment found only in the presence of God, or more succinctly, in Heaven
 - Lewis says "Heaven is where we come into complete and unceasing union with our Creator and yet also become most fully ourselves. It is the "far-off country" for which we were fearfully and wonderfully made⁵

⁵ Hope Made Certain – CS Lewis <http://blog.cslewis.com/hope-made-certain/>

- You see what Lewis is saying ...
 - While we may experience some satisfaction of our hopes here on earth ... they're really pointing forward and upward to a for more complete fulfilment in heaven
- And now do you begin to see how the resurrection brings us a deeper sense of hope
- The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the first fruits of what is to come ... the resurrection to eternal life of all who believe
- And if you're in Christ ... if your trust is in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour ... then you have the sure and certain hope of sharing in that resurrection
- And not only does that guarantee you the sure and certain hope of
 - The forgiveness of you sin
 - Salvation from God's judgment
 - Having your sin paid in full
- But it also guarantees you the sure and certain hope of having your deepest desires truly and completely fulfilled
- Because if you're in Christ for eternity ... do you know what that does for your craving for happiness?
 - You will experience the greatest joy and happiness so complete that every tear will be wiped away because there will be no more mourning crying or pain > just the joy of life lived as it was always meant to be
- Do you know what it will do for your desire for security?
 - You will know the deep security of having the creator of the universe as your heavenly Father who loves you so much he was willing to pay with the price of his son in order to secure your eternal future and all the blessings of an inheritance stored up in heaven for you
- Do you know what eternal life will do for your search for significance?
 - You will be so assured that you are of such great significance to God that he not only forgives you ... he adopts you as one of his children
 - So intimately does he know you he even knows the hairs on your head and you can call him "Abba Father."
- Sharing in the resurrection to eternal life will guarantee all your searching for significance, happiness and security will be complete
 - it will be fulfilled

- there will be no more searching
- no more doubts
- no more chasing after things
- no more lack of contentment
- You will have it in Christ

- This Easter friends, be assured of the historicity of Jesus resurrection
 - The facts are there for us to look at
 - We cannot just dismiss them
- Understand the significance of the resurrection
 - It assures us that those who are in Christ have had their debt paid in full
- Be comforted in the hope of the resurrection
 - For Jesus is the first fruits of the resurrection to eternal life for all who believe
 - And there you will find all your hopes will be truly satisfied ... truly fulfilled ... and truly found

- Happy Easter
 - Christ is risen > in him we have a sure and certain hope

PRAY