

LUTHERAN SENTINEL

A PUBLICATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD



THE CASE FOR

*The
Resurrection*



Too Late for the Rich Man, But Not for You.

Most of us are very familiar with the account Jesus tells in St. Luke, chapter 16 of “The Rich Man and Lazarus.” The formerly rich man had an apologetic presentation given to him upon his death. He was in hell and the beggar, Lazarus, who had been regularly at his gate in this life, was now in heaven. But it was too late. Gaining this knowledge of a real heaven and real hell would do nothing to change his circumstances. His sinful reason was still active however, blaming God in that had someone rose from the dead to warn him of this reality, he would have been convinced and spared this eternal torture.

He expressed this accusation under the guise of concern for his five brothers who were heading in the same direction. “I say to you, father Abraham, to send Lazarus to my father’s house, for I have five brothers – so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place.” (vv. 27-28) Abraham rightfully pointed out to him: “If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.” (v. 31)

Being confronted with the fact of or the evidence for the resurrection does not convert or create faith in the unbelieving heart. Another man by the name of Lazarus was raised by Jesus after having been buried for four days. Jesus’ enemies did not deny this miracle, but their unbelief remained, because when they observed Jesus’ popularity surge on account of this miracle of resurrection, we are told: “the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well.” (Jn. 12:10)

A week later, some of these same chief priests heard the report from the guard at Jesus’ tomb regarding the resurrection. Again, not denying the truth of Jesus’ resurrection, they paid the guard to lie and say that while they slept the disciples came and stole Jesus’ body. (cf. Matthew 28:11-15)

Now, do apologetic demonstrations of the veracity of God’s Word help? Of course, not after death, but in this life:

they can confirm the truth of what was claimed or the event described. We see this on Pentecost when Peter preaches to many pointing out how David in the Psalms prophesied about the Christ’s resurrection and that Jesus of Nazareth fit all the prophecies of the Christ. Peter then concluded: “This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.” (Acts 2: 32).

And these did more than get their attention. Those confirmed truths and events led them to ask, “Brothers, what shall we do?” They realized that they had crucified the Christ. They were told to believe in the one they had crucified, be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Three thousand were baptized that day. Shortly thereafter another two thousand were added to the number of believers. Then shortly after this we are told: “the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.” (Acts 6:7)

Christian apologists point out that an undeniable case can be made for Jesus’ resurrection, as demonstrated in the Gospels, the Book of Acts, 1 Corinthians 15, etc. At the same time, we confess it is not evidence that is the effective cause that converts, but the good news of what God has done by raising His Son to life, freed from all your sin charged against Him, freed from your deserved death – temporal and eternal – which He suffered completely, you along with all sinners are justified in this righteous holy living Substitute. This is the Word of Moses, the Prophets and the Apostles, i.e., God’s powerful Word. In Jesus, the crucified and risen Christ, you are forgiven of all your sins and declared to be right with God. The evidence can confirm the truth of his resurrection and his other claims, but it is this Word of justification in His name that truly sets the sinners free through faith.

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Rev. Paul Fries
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STAFF:

Pastor James Braun	<i>Editor</i>
Pastor Paul Fries	<i>ELS Communication Director</i>
Pastor Piet Van Kampen	<i>Contributing Editor</i>
Elsa Ferkenstad	<i>Subscription Manager</i>
Emeline Gullixson	<i>Proofreader</i>
Ryan Madson	<i>Layout & Design</i>



THE CASE FOR

The Resurrection

by **PASTOR TONY PITTENGER**, Contributing Writer
Bethany Lutheran Church, Port Orchard, Wash.

Do you know whose face is on a U.S. one dollar bill? Do you know anything about him? Is it George Washington, Commander in Chief of the Continental Army and first President of the United States in 1789?

But how do you know that any of that is true? You weren't alive in 1789. Cameras didn't exist back then. Consider for a moment: Why do you believe that there really was a man named George Washington, "Father of our country," etc.?

You believe these things because reliable witnesses, friend and foe, wrote about him, recording his actions and passing them down to the next generation.

Have you ever heard that he had wooden teeth? That's most likely not true. Back then, false wooden teeth were all the poor could afford, if they could afford any. Those who were wealthier used dentures made of sturdier materials. Even that the wooden-teeth myth can be corrected is important.

Now consider why you believe in Jesus' death and resurrection. Reliable witnesses recorded it, didn't they? Both friends and foes along with "neutral" historians of the time. Sure, the foes say His disciples stole His body, but notice what they don't say, what they couldn't say...

They couldn't say, "He's still there. He's still right where we put Him. Come and see for yourself." No. The only ones coming and seeing were His mourners peering into an empty tomb.

Many of those eyewitnesses were so certain of what they had seen that they no longer viewed death as the worst thing which could happen to them. Far worse would be losing this, letting go of it. They'd rather die.

None of them conspired together for riches, for power, or for pleasure. On "pain of death," none of them recanted, retracting their statements about the resurrection.

These eyewitnesses were so convincing that the generation after them, the generation which had never seen Jesus but which had seen His followers, believed as well. When threatened with death and when offered a way to remain in this earthly life, many of them refused to turn their backs on this faith.

Now let's be clear: Faith comes from hearing (Rom 10:17), but hearing what? Hearing of God's love for mankind in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

You believe what history has taught you about George Washington because reliable witnesses have testified to it. Your faith in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection is even more certain. God the Holy Spirit used reliable witnesses to record it. Even unbelieving enemies admitted His grave was empty!

This means that your sins are forgiven, they've been paid for. This also means that death will not be the end for you.

We believe that Jesus died and rose again. Even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep (1 Thess 4:14).



Easter Exordiums

by **PASTOR GLENN OBENBERGER**, President
Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Mankato, Minn.

Some of our ELS pastors use what is called an exordium prior to preaching the festival sermon. Then the congregations rise to sing the exordium verse. The exordium is not an additional introduction to the theme highlighted in the sermon text. It is more akin to a keynote address for that particular festal day. It is to capture the mood of the day (Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost) prior to the sermon. We might think of a convention or conference keynote speech as providing a rousing proclamation encapsulating the overarching theme for the event participants. In a sense, this is what an exordium is to accomplish for festal-goers by focusing on the flavor of the particular feast day, instead of the particular focus of the text for the sermon of the day. Here are two examples of Easter exordiums:

1 On Good Friday afternoon, we are informed that the women watched where Jesus was buried and saw how the stone was rolled into place. There no doubt was another observer of Jesus' burial - Satan. How delighted he must have been to see the power of death come to God's Son. He knew of Jesus' prediction that He would rise again. He knew that Jesus had raised others, but it still remained to be seen if He could break the grip of death Himself. No doubt Satan delighted to hear the chief priests and Pharisees ask Pilate to make the tomb secure, calling Jesus "that deceiver." Satan, the father of lies, enjoyed hearing Truth incarnate called "that deceiver."

Perhaps Satan even visited the tomb between Friday and Sunday and frustratingly observed that Jesus' body was not decomposing like all other human bodies do in the grave. Even though Jesus gave His body over to death, He personally remained sinless, therefore death had no personal claim on Him. Yet Jesus' tomb was secure, and the grave cloths were still in place. But then Christ was made alive and He went directly to Satan's eternal home - He descended to hell. There Jesus showed that He was very much alive and fulfilled all that was said concerning His work of salvation. Jesus then rose, left the tomb, and an angel

came to roll back the stone to show that He was gone. As always, Satan was powerless to stop the work of God.

But Satan was not done. The guards would be bribed to lie. The disciples lived in fear and would not believe even with eyewitness reports that the tomb was empty. Sin, death, and hell were all defeated by the Savior sent by God for all people; but Satan still roamed the earth and does even today, looking for those he can devour with unbelief.

How about you? Has Satan paid you off with enough worldly pleasures and treasures that the report of Jesus' resurrection is of little interest to you? Are you caught up in all the fears that this world can throw at you, that you take no comfort in Jesus' victory over Satan by conquering death for you? No, you are in God's house this morning because you believe this most glorious truth that the One whom God has sent to take your place as the condemned sinner. Not only did He take your punishment all the way to the point of death, but our risen Lord overcame all of this for you - He lives, and you with all your fellow Christians throughout the world on this Easter festal day have reason to rejoice beyond measure.

2 If you were an unbeliever and heard that the God of the universe was going to come Himself to our earth to address a problem for our human race, what would you ask it to be? The ending of all wars between nations? The stopping of all crimes against humanity? The cure for cancer or heart disease? How about the ending of all natural disasters? What is the threat that has plagued the human race the most, which you would want solved by your Creator God?

My guess is that it would be none of them specifically, but all of them in general. These are all only symptoms. There is a common root problem to all of them. You know what it is. That is why you, my fellow believers, come to the house of God on Easter morning to worship in joyous celebration. The root problem is sin, but that in itself is not the greatest threat, which we all fear the most. It is the resulting death, which comes to our human race on account of sin. And it is not merely the physical death

that comes to our bodies, but the eternal death of condemnation that is received by all unbelievers in body and soul.

The eternal God came to our world to solve all these problems and more. The Son of God who became flesh, said concerning His purpose for the human race: "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." This was all accomplished by Jesus willingly laying down His life for us by dying on the cross and by taking it up again in rising from the grave. So, when Jesus greeted those to whom He appeared after rising from the dead, He said: "Peace be with you." All that stood between us sinful human beings and our Creator has been addressed, so that God is reconciled to us through our crucified and risen Lord Jesus. Through faith in this Holy One sent by God for you, be reconciled to Him. If ever there was a basis for worship, it is here; God has rescued us from our deserved death by the resurrection of His Son - forevermore!



THE CASE FOR *The Resurrection*

JESUS DID NOT RISE FROM THE DEAD. ...or so they say.

by **PASTOR DAVID THOMPSON**, Director,
The Center for Apologetics and Worldviews
apologetics@blc.edu / 507-344-7395

Deniers or doubters of Jesus' resurrection have their arguments or facts which they consider to be reasonable or indisputable. Even Christians wonder whether they might be true. So, how should believers react? First, they should not simply say, "Well, the Bible says so." For then the denier or doubter might simply think or say that Christians have a blind faith, an irrational faith, where reason and evidence are completely lacking. But second – and very importantly – the Christian needs to understand how the New Testament itself makes the case for the resurrection that would be beneficial for the unbeliever and believer.

There are several basic arguments used against the resurrection of Christ, including:

1. The followers of Jesus had **hallucinations** that He was alive.
2. Jesus never died on the cross, He merely **swooned** and revived in the tomb.
3. The women and the disciples went to the **wrong tomb** on Easter morning.
4. The body of Jesus was **stolen** from the tomb by the disciples.
5. **Common experience** tells us that people do not come back to life after being truly dead.



So, What If...?

What if you come across (or someone proposes to you) one of those arguments? The chart below can be helpful in how to view them by explaining what is included and what is missing in each of the arguments.

	NO EVIDENCE PROVIDED	HISTORICAL EVIDENCE PROVIDED	INDIRECT EVIDENCE PROVIDED	DIRECT EVIDENCE PROVIDED	CLEARLY RIDICULOUS
1. Hallucinated	✓				✓
2. Swooned	✓				✓
3. Wrong Tomb	✓				✓
4. Stolen Body		✓			✓
5. Common Experience			✓		
Or, Jesus rose bodily		✓	✓	✓	

Three of the above provide no evidence, they remain mere theories; in other words, they are only speculations or blind-faith positions. One – the disciples stole the body – has minimal historical evidence (Matt 27:62-66), but it falls into the category of the ridiculous, along with the first three. For this theory assumes, among other ridiculous things, that the disciples would willingly suffer greatly and even die for something they knew they lied about. People may die for a lie, but not something they know to be a lie. The fifth one is more credible because of indirect evidence, also called circumstantial evidence. That is, it relies on what all people experience in their lives, namely: people who are really dead for several days do not come back to life. This is true, but that does not mean it is true without exception.

But what is common to all five is that they ignore or deny what is called direct evidence. Direct evidence is how the New Testament makes the case for the resurrection, and exactly what is relied on most heavily in a court of law. In other words, eyewitnesses.

Eyewitness Testimony

One eyewitness might work. Two or three are better. Of course, they must agree with one another and be shown to be reliable. So, if there are many witnesses – dozens and dozens – all saying the same thing, that becomes hard to refute even if common experience seems to point in the opposite direction. It is noteworthy that all the disciples (not just Thomas) doubted or denied the resurrection of Jesus, partly because of “common experience.” And they remained doubters until they heard, saw, and even touched the One who was supposed to be dead. The physical appearances of Christ occurred a minimum of twelve times over a 40-day

period at various places to differing groups – sometimes to one person, two people, seven people, ten people, eleven people, and, on one occasion, to over 500 people.

And just as important, these were recorded either by the eyewitnesses themselves or by those had direct contact with the eyewitnesses and did careful investigation (John 19:35; 20:30-31; 21:34-35; Luke 1:1-3; Acts 1:1-3; 1 Cor 15:3-8; 1 John 1:1-3).

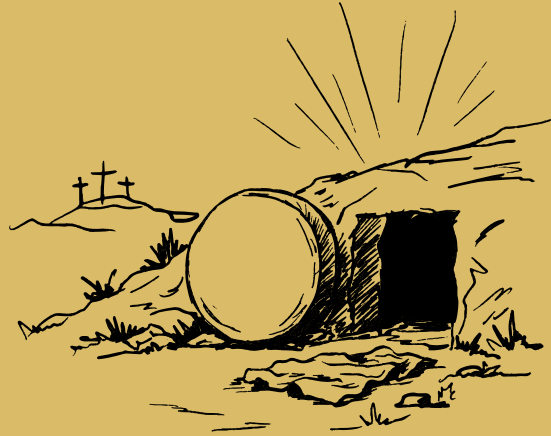
This is how the New Testament makes the case for the resurrection of Christ as can be seen many times in the book of Acts (Acts 1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:30-32; 10:39-41; 13:30-31; 22:3-15; 26:15-16, 26).

What Does This Mean?

It means Jesus is who He claimed to be: the Son of God in human flesh (Rom 1:4). It means before being resurrected, He was dead, having been crucified in a way that only the worst criminals would be killed. It means this one most brutally killed on the cross was the God who made the heavens and earth. It means that sin is very real, very serious, very universal, and could only be remedied in this way. And, most importantly, it means that forgiveness, justification, and peace with God were and are an accomplished reality.

The Lutheran Warning

The resurrection and the testimony of the eyewitnesses are evidence, indisputable. However, this is not to say evidence is some sort of power of God for salvation. Rather, such evidence – apologetics – points to and confirms the most important truth. What important truth? The gospel, which is and always will remain the “power of God for salvation” (Rom 1:16).



a Harmony of the *Resurrection Accounts*

COMPILED FROM THE NKJV BY **REV. JEFF HENDRIX** (A.D. 2026).

Editor's Introduction

"It was a strange and dreadful strife when life and death contended," sings Luther (ELH 343 v. 4). If death was thrown in turmoil, how much turmoil was experienced by those who assumed death could not be overcome? When we read the resurrection accounts together, it looks like a chaotic theatre scene: guards fainting, women crying, men hiding, characters entering and exiting left and right, running here and there, some going out to look for others while missing each other completely.

Critics of the resurrection who have difficulties with the chronology forget that for the main characters, this truly would have been a reality-shattering event. Chaos should be expected. But chaos can be brought to order.

The resurrection is the first day of the beginning of a new creation. Creation began, if you remember, in the same way. God brought order from chaos, darkness to light. Psalm 118 reminds us of this. The resurrection is the new day the Lord

"has made." The first thing that happens on that day – traditionally held to be after sundown in the evening (Gen. 1:5) – is something that is unseen, echoing when God brought light from darkness through a proclamation of His Word. Christ goes and proclaims the victory of light over darkness to those in hell. This is why the Apostles' Creed places "He descended into hell" before "the third day He rose again."

Then, as the sun begins to rise on that first day, the most unlikely of all people are the first eyewitnesses: women coming to anoint His body for burial.

The following is a harmony of the resurrection accounts in Scripture. As you read it, remember that the original authors did not intend to write chronologies, which accounts for some of the difficulty in putting them together. Most of Scripture is not chronological. Rather, the various books were inspired by the Holy Spirit to shine light on truth. The resurrection is the ultimate true story told to shine light on the ultimate truth.

A Harmony of the Day of Resurrection

Psalm 118:24

This is the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it!

Colossians 2:15; 1 Peter 3:18-21

Christ, having disarmed principalities and powers, made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Being made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 28:2-5; Mark 16:1-4; John 20:2; Luke 24:3-4; Mark 16:5-8; Luke 24:8, Luke 9:22

And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.

Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.¹

Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, “Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?”

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large.

Then Mary Magdalene ran [away from the tomb].

[The other women] then went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments.

They saw [one,] a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.” So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

[As they were running,] they remembered His words:

“The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.”



1. While five women go to the tomb, Mark only names three, mentioning specifically their inability to roll the stone away, seemingly as to connect Jacob's amazing rolling away of the stone (Gen 29:8-12) that covered a well which normally required three gatherings of shepherds to do.

**John 20:2-10; Luke 24:12; 1 Corinthians 15:4;
John 20:11-17**

[Mary Magdalene] came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved,² and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.” So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself.

Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. Then they went away again to their own homes.

Peter marveled to himself at what had happened. And afterwards Christ appeared to Cephas.³

But Mary [following them back to the tomb] stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. Then they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.” Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, “Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him, “Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’ ”

**Luke 24:9-11; Luke 24:13-14; Matthew 28:9-10;
John 20:18**

Then...Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, returned from the tomb and told all these things to the [disciples] and to all the rest. And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.

Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. [They went out and] they talked together of all these things which had happened.

[Then the women hurried to Bethany,] and as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, “Rejoice!” So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.”

[Now also,] Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her.



2. On the day of the Sabbath, John and Peter are likely staying at the home of John in the south part of Jerusalem (the place where the doors are locked); along with John's mother Salome (also the mother of James) the wife of Zebedee. At least one other disciple, Cloepas is there as well, along with his wife Mary; and Mary Magdalene. Another one of the women who go to the tomb, Joanna, is likely staying with her husband in the old Hasmonaean Palace, residence of Herod Antipas. Also staying there is her friend Susanna.

Most of the disciples (~eight) have fled to Bethany. The only exception is Thomas, who is conspicuously absent, likely abandoning the gathering immediately after the crucifixion. By Easter Sunday night, they will all return to Jerusalem by the time the two Emmaus disciples get back.

3. Peter

Luke 24:14–33; John 20:19

So it was, while [the two traveled to Emmaus and they] conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. And He said to them, “What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?” Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, “Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?”

And He said to them, “What things?” So they said to Him, “The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see.”

Then He said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther.

But they constrained Him, saying, “Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” And He went in to stay with them.

Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?”

So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together (the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews).

Luke 24:34-40, Mark 16:14; John 20:20-25

[They said to them,] “The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.

Now as they said these things, as they sat at the table, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, “Peace to you.”

But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, “Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.”

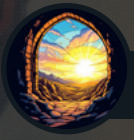
When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.

Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

Psalm 118:29

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.





Matthew 22:23-33

Jesus Himself Makes the Case for The Resurrection

by **PASTOR CHRISTIAN EISENBEIS**, Contributing Writer,
First Trinity Lutheran Church, Marinette, Wisc.

Historians tell us that the Sadducees were indeed, as their name suggests, “righteous;” a righteously powerful party of aristocrats, whose influence on political and religious life in Israel was disproportionate to their small numbers.

The Bible tells us that the Sadducees were a party of skeptics “who say that there is no resurrection” (Matt 22:23). To them, hope in the resurrection of the body—and the life everlasting—was the wishful thinking of common people, with no root in reality.

Now, they may not have been as vocal about it as their Pharisee rivals, but the Sadducees, too, were stirred up by the events of Palm Sunday. They sensed in the crowds that followed this Teacher from Nazareth a loss of their power and influence. Why not get some of that back and make the Teacher look foolish with a question about one of His most “foolish” teachings?

They approached Jesus two days later and quoted the law of Moses: “If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up children for his brother” (Matt 22:24; compare this with what Moses actually said in Deuteronomy 25:5-6). Then they told a story about a woman who married seven brothers in succession. The question was, “In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will she be” (Matt 22:28)?

Jesus could’ve dismissed the Sadducees and their story as absurd, but He answered their question. “You are wrong,” He said, “because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage” (Matt 22:29-30). God ordained marriage and its blessings for this world, not the next. And the bodies God raises to life are transformed; by His power, Jesus said, they become “like angels in heaven” (Matt 22:30)—

and angels were something else the Sadducees didn’t accept (Acts 23:8)!

Again, Jesus could’ve sent the Sadducees on their way. But He wasn’t going to let them leave without making the case for the resurrection.

The Sadducees had appealed to Moses to support their unbelief. After all, they thought, if Moses could command a man’s brother to marry his widow, unconcerned about whose wife she’d be in heaven, then he must’ve been a Sadducee at heart: a fellow skeptic who understood that this life is the only life.

So, with the measure they used, Jesus measured it back to them. “Have you not read what was said to you by God?” (Matt 22:31). Then He quoted what was said to Moses from the burning bush: “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Matt 22:32; Exod 3:6). Every Sadducee knew those patriarchs had been dead for centuries when God spoke those words. But God didn’t say, “I was their God.” He said, “I am,” revealing His holy name and making the case for the resurrection, for “He is not God of the dead,” Jesus declared, “but of the living” (Matt 22:32).

“When the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching” (Matt 22:32), while the Sadducees remained skeptical. They’re still among us, aren’t they? Think about the strangers who come to a funeral at your church. If they’re listening to the lessons, the sermon, and what you say to comfort the bereaved, they might think it’s wishful thinking, absurd, unreal. But they’re not going to leave that day without hearing the case for the resurrection!

You and I share a living hope in the One who makes that case Himself, in His own body and in His Word: “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). May Jesus continue to make His case in our hearts and in the heart of every skeptic!

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The Sign of Jonah

by **PASTOR STEVEN BROCKDORF**, Contributing Writer,
Reformation Lutheran Church, Hillsboro, Ore.



We confess: “The third day He rose again according to the Scriptures.” That is, according to the Old Testament Scriptures.

The psalms and prophets prophesy of Jesus’ resurrection, but the Old Testament also records several risings from the dead. Hebrews 11 tells us the sacrifice of Isaac was a figurative rising from the dead. Elijah and Elisha each raised a child from the dead. A dead soldier revived when his body touched the bones of Elisha. These accounts provide connections and images for meditation. They also show that Jesus’ resurrection was unique because He rose by His own power. His resurrection is also the basis for preaching the Gospel.

The best known Old Testament image of the resurrection brings together a picture for meditation and a prophecy of Jesus into one historical account. Jesus said that as Jonah was three days in the belly of the sea creature, He would be in the belly of the earth.

Reading Jonah reminds us, “God loved the world in this way” (John 3:16). God doesn’t tolerate sin and rebellion; He condemns it. Jonah begins, “The Word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, ‘Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.’”

Instead of obeying, Jonah ran away from the Lord. His hateful rebellion jeopardized a boatload of sailors. The men asked Jonah about himself. Jonah explained that he served God who made the sea, where they were in fear, and the dry land, where they wanted to be. Jonah said that if they threw him into the sea, it would grow calm. They tried to save themselves, but things got worse. It is the same for us trying to save ourselves from God’s wrath over sin, rather than by

the sacrifice of Jesus. The men asked God for mercy and threw Jonah into the sea. It grew calm, and the men sacrificed and made vows to God. God used the rebelliousness of his prophet to bring the sailors to faith.

God caused a sea creature to swallow Jonah, where he prayed words that remind us of psalms and Jesus. Jonah expressed faith that he would, “look again to toward Your holy temple.” He also declared: “Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.”

On the third day, the creature spit Jonah onto dry land. He figuratively rose from the dead. Again, he was told to preach to the Ninevites. This time, he preached repentance in the name of the Word of the Lord, who would one day become flesh.

Jonah knew preaching repentance implies forgiveness. He complained, “Was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.”

Our risen Savior said, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations” (Luke 24:46-47). That preaching to all nations already occurred in the account of Jonah where everyone was called to repentance, including the rebellious prophet. From this we know that we, too, are called to repent, and offered remission of sins in Jesus, the Word of the Lord, who dwelt among us.



Is Christ Risen
for ME?

by **PASTOR PETER FAUGSTAD**, Contributing Writer,
Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

“Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!” That was not the disciples’ reaction on Easter Sunday. “Christ is risen!” said the angel (Mark 16:6). “Christ is risen!” said the women (Luke 24:9). “Christ is risen!” said the Emmaus disciples (Mark 16:13; Luke 24:34). But this shocking message, this wonderful news, was met with questions and doubt. “Is Christ risen?” they wondered. “We won’t believe it until we see it with our own eyes.”

We know the truth that Jesus certainly died and certainly rose again on the third day. We know it because the disciples did see Jesus after His resurrection, and they reported exactly what they saw and heard from Him. His resurrection is a fact. Christ is risen indeed!

But where our doubt comes in is here: “Is Christ risen for me? How can I be sure? How can I know that when I die, I will rise again? Or that my loved ones will rise again?” We can understand the disciples’ doubts—when had anyone ever risen from the dead? Our doubts seem reasonable too—when have we ever seen someone rise from the dead? But experience only goes so far.

The two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus on Easter afternoon were experiencing sadness. Jesus joined them on the road, but they didn’t know it was Him. They told Him

everything they had witnessed and heard over the last few days, including the report of Jesus’ resurrection.

And Jesus said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:25-26). Then what did He do? “[B]eginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (v. 27).

We may not have seen anyone rise from the dead. But we do have the Scriptures, God’s own Word. Jesus’ life and works match perfectly with all the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. And everything that He told His disciples would happen during Holy Week, including His resurrection on the third day, did happen exactly as He predicted.

So we do not need to doubt His promise to return on the last day to raise up the dead, or His promise that He has gone to prepare a place for all believers in heaven, or His promise to be present with us now through His Word and Sacraments to strengthen our faith. His resurrection verifies that what He promises, He does.

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