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Today we celebrate one of the 2-events upon which all of Christianity depends. If either two of these events did not happen, the entire thing fails miserably and becomes just a religion of man, no different than any other religion in the world.

The first event is when Jesus was conceived by the Spirit of God in the womb of a virgin. It was necessary that Jesus was absolutely free from the sin that corrupts all men or else He could not have been offered up as a perfect sacrifice for our sins and none of us would be forgiven. We would still be dead in our sins. So He had to be born sinless. This mechanics of how Mary could become pregnant with the seed of God is a mystery when you limit your thoughts to the things you can understand, but as the Angel Gabriel said when he told Mary what was going to happen: “nothing is impossible with God.”

The Second event is the bodily resurrection of Jesus which we celebrate today. If Jesus did not rise from the dead in His body, then there is no HOPE that one day you or I will rise from the dead. There is no way around this issue. If He actually rose we have the HOPE of eternal life. If, however, it was all a clever hoax perpetuated by His followers and He just decomposed in some unknown and undiscovered grave, then Christianity is fraud. In 1 Corinthians Paul said:

***1 Corinthians 15:12-20***

But tell me this—since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead? For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ was not raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your trust in God is useless. And we apostles would all be lying about God, for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave, but that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead. If

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there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still under condemnation for your sins. In that case, all who have died believing in Christ have perished! And if we have hope in Christ only for this life, we are the most miserable people in the world. **But the fact is that Christ has been raised from the dead.** He has become the first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again.

You might be wondering how Paul could declare so definitively that Christ rose from the dead. After all, no one filmed the event. This is probably the question that was in the mind of the Corinthians. Think about it, to say Jesus' resurrection is a fact is a pretty audacious claim. The History channel and the Discovery channel would have some serious issues with this claim. Well, I am not going to go into all the ways in which we can know that the resurrection is a fact (and if you would like some of that information, email me and I can send it to you), but I do want us to consider why Paul was so vehement in his proclamation.

### *1 Corinthians 15:3-9*

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

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Paul claimed the resurrection was a statement of fact because of the overwhelming abundance of people who saw Jesus and interacted with Him after He had been scourged with 39 lashes from a lead tip whip, beaten up, crucified, stabbed in the heart with a spear, wrapped in 75 pounds of embalming ointment, and buried in a tomb which was sealed with a huge 1-2-ton rock, which was guarded by Roman soldiers. Yet, some of these witnesses talked to Him, some touched Him, some ate with Him, and some saw Him ascend into Heaven. Keep in mind we are not talking about just His disciples or a handful of followers, but of over 500 people, most of who were still alive during the time that Paul was writing. In other words, Paul was telling the Corinthians that if they wanted to go send an investigation team and interview these people, they would come to believe that Jesus has indeed risen from the dead based on the plethora of testimony. Paul opened the door for anyone to go check out the facts; a pretty bold move if the resurrection was just a hoax. Surely even the most remedial of investigators would be able to blow holes in the story if it was fabricated.

Compare that to the fact that the Jewish leadership could not even find 2 witnesses who could testify the same thing about Jesus at His trial—not even 2. This was a huge problem for in *Numbers 35:30* the Law required that no man could be put to death on the testimony of one witness alone. So what was their problem? Jesus ministered for 3-years all throughout Jerusalem and Galilee yet the Jewish leadership could not find even 2-people who could agree on testimony against Him. This is unfathomable.

Then unable to procure any real witnesses, the Priestly leadership gathered together those who agreed with them to give false testimony about Jesus. Yet even though they were coached, when it came time to publicly testify they could not

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keep it together and were unable to give consistent testimony. Apparently, even a conspiracy among a few to sustain a lie, in the midst of public inquisition, is more difficult than we would imagine. This is the reason Jesus ultimately had to be condemned on His words alone. The High Priest had become totally frustrated with the inability to find witnesses—true or false—and so He turned to Jesus and asked Him if He was the Messiah and Jesus said “I am.” (See *Mark 14:55-62*). It was for this statement alone, which they considered blasphemous, that Jesus was crucified.

So in dramatic contrast to the ability of the Jews to find anyone to give consistent testimony against Jesus, God made sure that there was an abundance of verifiable witnesses who would testify as to Jesus’ bodily resurrection.

So the good news is that since Jesus rose from the dead, our HOPE of spending eternity with God is certain. Ours is not a HOPE of wishes, but a HOPE of confidence. And so we celebrate this great event –the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Last week we finished chapter 4 of John and we now move into Chapter 5, but we are going to start in verses 24-30 which, by the way, is not just so we can talk about *resurrection*, but it will actually help us understand a very difficult verse that we will cover next week from the earlier part of this Chapter. So it is kind of fortuitous that we are here.

### ***John 5:24-30***

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who **hears** My word, and **believes** Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will **hear** the voice of the **Son of God**, and those who hear **will live**.

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"For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which **all** who are in the tombs will **hear** His voice, and will **come forth**; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment." I can do nothing on My own initiative. **As I hear**, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

As Jesus is famous for doing, in just a few words He deals with a complexity of issues that all deal with *resurrection*. Jesus declares that not only is *resurrection* possible, He states that it will be a reality for everyone. Yes, everyone will rise from the dead and will live for eternity. For some this will be a wonderful experience that fulfills every hope and dream that they could ever imagine and for others it will be less than pleasant.

I also want you to notice that John continues with the same theme that has been running all the way through this gospel—hearing and believing. What this passage discloses is that regardless of a person's opinion, or view of God and His Word, ultimately everyone, without exception, will hear and will respond to the voice of the Lord. There will be no option in this matter. This passage is also unique in that it speaks about the past, the present and the future.

### ***John 5:24***

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of

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death into life."

Jesus starts by saying there is an eternity now which continues forever. Let me explain. All of us have sinned, by nature and by choice; and, therefore we find ourselves separated from God for all eternity. He is perfect and we are not; and imperfection cannot dwell in the midst of perfection. John made that very clear in Chapter *1:18* where He draws from *Exodus 33:20* which states that no man can see God and live. God calls this place of spiritual separation "death."

### ***Romans 5:12, 16***

When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned...For Adam's sin led to condemnation

All of mankind, for all of time, has been bound under this separation and worse than separation from God they stand condemned and are facing a judgment which is intended to unleash for all eternity the full penalty for their crimes against the perfect law of God.

Now this "death" is referred to in the present tense and is therefore not tied to whether a person is physically alive or dead, this is the current and ongoing condition of their soul. In other words, before a person believes, as Jesus states it, death is their now and death is their eternity. Unless there is a *resurrection* unto life, they live in state of eternal condemnation.

The fact explains why no one has ever been able to fix this world much less fix the brokenness that is within each person; a brokenness that causes everyone to

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knowingly and unknowingly violate the ways of God. You see without *resurrection* unto life all of mankind is absolutely dead to the things of God and powerless to do anything about it. This brokenness is endemic and penetrates all that we do such that even if we were to collect and parade all our good deeds in front of God we would find them to be nothing but filthy rags (*Isaiah 64:6*).

But the good news of *John 5:24* is that even though man is wholly incapable of doing anything about his condition of death and condemnation, God can and did. Through the death of His Son on the cross, He removed the sin that eternally separates; thereby, providing a way for a person to be in relationship with God.

The pathway, however, is only through hearing and believing the Word. That is it, just believing. It all sounds so simple, right? Well, it really is that simple! If you choose to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, part of the Godhead, that He came in the flesh as a man, died to pay the penalty of sin for all of mankind, rose again, and ask Him to come and live in your heart and become your personal Lord and Savior, then at that moment in time you come into perfect alignment with the Word of God and you instantly cross over from present and eternal death into present and eternal life—you are *resurrected!*

### ***Romans 5:17-19***

For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ. Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for

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everyone. Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

This is incredible news. What we could never accomplish on our own, God did on our behalf and the only thing He requires of us is to believe. This phrase “has” eternal life is in the present, active, indicative form, which simply means that there is no doubt that you now have eternal life. It is your present reality and is a statement of fact. It is not something that you get at some point in the future (you are not waiting for it); it is not something that will ever wane or diminish in any capacity; rather, it is always your present reality. This is really good news.

Jesus tells us that those who believe possess eternal life because they have passed from death into this life. Now this phrase “has passed” is similar to “has” eternal life with one difference, it is not in the “present” form but is in the “perfect,” active, indicative form. The distinction is critical. It means that your passing from death into life is a direct result of your decision to believe; but, it also indicates that things are at rest for the results of your decision are ongoing. Simply said, there is nothing left to do in order to either obtain or secure eternal life. It is yours! All is at rest! The work is completed. That is why on the cross Jesus said: “It is finished.” Now you can just exist in this place and begin experiencing eternity now.

So what does it look like to “experience eternity” now? Your new life in Jesus Christ transcends the existence of those who are physically living but spiritually “dead,” for you are no longer bound by the rules, constraints or requirements of that old life. In other words, you are no longer a slave to sin but you can now choose to live for the glory of God.

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We talked about this a bit last week. Going back to our charts, this new life is represented by the *New Creation* which is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit of God. Your *New Creation* is who you are, it's how God sees you, and it is who you will forever be. Your *Old Man*, however, will one day perish along with your flesh. In addition, his power to rule and dominate your life has been broken by your *resurrection*. He can no longer force you to do anything that you don't allow to happen. You now have the power!

### ***Romans 6:5-14***

Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.

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Isn't this amazing? If you are a believer, you have the ability through the Spirit of God to choose to live in a way that transcends the evil demands of this world and the demands of your old sinful nature. The fact that we have the power does not mean that we will automatically or always choose to use it; we have to learn how to access this power in all the situations we find ourselves in. But, regardless, we hold in our hands the ultimate power to live as *new creations*.

I told you Jesus communicated a mouthful. In just one sentence, He opens up the possibility that eternal life now and forever can be yours. You might be thinking that this is awesome for us, but what about all who lived prior to the time that Jesus rose from the dead, what about them?

### ***John 5:25***

Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

Jesus has a plan. He continues with this idea of *resurrection* for those who hear and believe. But the subject changes from those who are physically alive and spiritually “dead” to those who are both physically and spiritually “dead.” Jesus makes this distinction by using the Greek word “nekros,” which literally means corpse. Jesus lets His audience know that He has a *resurrection* plan for all those who died believing in the living God; and the time to deal with them is coming very soon—for the hour is coming and now is.

To understand this, we have to understand a little bit about what happens to a person's soul when they die for God has always dealt separately with believers and unbelievers in the matters of both life and in death. First of all to dispel any

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worries, if you are a believer, the moment you die you will instantly be in the presence of the Lord.

### ***2 Corinthians 5:8***

Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from these bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord.

This is the wonderful news about Jesus' work on the cross and the power of the resurrection; when we die we get to go straight to heaven to be with the Lord. This should be extremely comforting for believers and an enticing invitation for unbelievers. But this is only made possible because our sins have been forgiven and we have been made perfect in the *New Creation*. Those whose sins have not been forgiven and do not have the Spirit of God living within them do not go to heaven. This brings us to the plan that Jesus was talking about for all those who died prior to His resurrection.

In ***Luke 16***, we have an interesting parable of a man named Lazarus and in this parable Jesus makes it clear that when people died those who had faith in God were comforted in a place called the bosom of Abraham while others suffer in flames. He also makes it clear that there is a gap between these two places that can never be bridged. But although some were comforted, the bosom of Abraham is not heaven and they are not in the presence of God. Rather, because of their faith, God preserved them in a safe place until the day that they could hear and believe in the true object of their faith—the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus refers to this place as paradise. When He was being crucified He told the thief that hung next to Him: “I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.” (***Luke 23:43***).

Now we know that this was not a reference to heaven for Jesus Himself told us that upon His death He would spend the next 3-days, prior to His resurrection, in the depths of the earth and not in heaven.

***Matthew 12:40-41***

For just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Paul also makes reference to this trip.

***Ephesians 4:9***

Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth.

Further, after His *resurrection* He told Mary that He had not yet ascended to the Father (***John 20:17***). So what happened when He descended in to the lower parts of the earth? Now, I am speculating but what I think happened is that Jesus went to paradise and explained to all those there that their faith in God was really faith in the Son of God, for all things are completed in Him. And with this message, He gave those that heard and believed the opportunity to be *resurrected* unto life and forever live in the presence of the Lord. My speculation is based on the fact that Jesus told a Roman centurion who had expressed great faith that He would one day dine with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God.

***Matthew 8:10-12***

"Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. "I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

According to *Galatians 3:29; 6:16*, this phrase "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" is not only to be understood literally but also as a metaphor for all those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ. So this centurion would be in heaven with the faithful saints of old. Peter also confirms that the dead were preached the gospel.

***1 Peter 4:6***

For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.

So believers go to heaven when they die and they join those who lived by faith and died during the time prior to Jesus' resurrection. But what about those who did not believe before His resurrection or after? According to the parable in *Luke 16*, they are in the place of flames, or we would call it Hades, waiting the time of the final judgment.

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***John 5:28-29***

"Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment."

Now Jesus takes this discussion, which must have already had their heads spinning, and tells them about the final judgment—the hour which is coming. A lot takes place in this final hour. I will try hard not to confuse you but again there is a different plan for believers and unbelievers.

First, for believers, our *resurrection* experience continues. There will be a day when Jesus gathers together all those who are His. Some will still be living on the earth and others will be in spirit in the presence of the Lord. But on this day, all of us will be transformed and we will get a new body that will be ours for eternity. We will not be these spirits floating around in heaven, but like Jesus we will have an immortal body.

***1 Corinthians 15:50-53***

What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These dying bodies cannot inherit what will last forever. But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed.

For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

Again, this is wonderful and comforting news for believers and an enticing invitation for unbelievers; especially considering the alternative, the *resurrection* of judgment. Jesus mentions a time when all those who have died without Christ will face judgment for the deeds done in the flesh. It's interesting that even though these people refused to listen to the voice of God and believe during their life, on this one day they will not only listen, but they will obey—they will all come forth.

### ***Revelation 20:11-15***

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

This is a *resurrection* that honestly you want nothing to do with. Those who are spiritually “dead” will spend eternity separated from God forever suffering the penalty for their sins. Whatever this looks like, it will be far worse than what they

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experienced in Hades for even Hades will be tossed in this place called the Lake of Fire.

Now some of you might be really uncomfortable with this whole judgment thing. But Jesus made it clear that His judgment is just especially when you consider that all that God has asked of anybody is to believe in His Word, that's it!

***John 5:26-27; 30***

"For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man... As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

I know this was a lot and it has been a very heavy topic, but I thought it was important that you really understand what Jesus communicated regarding the implications of the *resurrection*—His own and ours. Remember, everyone will be resurrected, without exception. So I encourage you and I invite you to be part of those who are—and will be—*resurrected* unto life. It's as easy as choosing to believe the truth of the Word of God, which can be summed up in the proclamation that everyone will ultimately make anyways—that Jesus is the Lord. So you might as well make it now.

***Philippians 2:9-11***

For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL

BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Please, if you have not yet made that declaration to believe, please do it now and live. Don't wait; it is not worth it the risk. For those of you who believe, today is a day to seriously rejoice and celebrate, for our now and our eternity is all based on the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. Rejoice!

Let's Pray