

Radiant Church, Easter Sunday, April 16, 2017

Mike →

Jesus began teaching people what life was going to be like under the rule of this true King in His forever Kingdom. He not only taught people how to live in this Kingdom, but He gave them demonstrations, evidence of what His Kingdom is and would be like:

- In His Kingdom, there is no blindness. He gave sight to the blind
- In His Kingdom, there is no sickness. He healed the sick
- In His Kingdom, there is no sin. He forgave sin
- In His Kingdom, there are no marginalized. He befriended sinners
- In His Kingdom, nature is at peace. He calmed the storm
- In His Kingdom, there are no evil powers. He cast out demons
- In His Kingdom, there is no death. He raised the dead

Many people followed Jesus. They wanted to be a part of this kind of Kingdom. They were starting to believe He was finally God's answer to what they wanted and had hoped for.

Abigail →

Of the many people who followed Him, He selected twelve disciples He would train to carry out His mission after He left. These men dropped everything to follow Jesus. They believed Jesus was going to overturn the Romans, set God's chosen people free, and bring in a new golden age of peace. They wanted to be near Him. So they followed Jesus. They loved Jesus. They learned from Jesus. They served Jesus.

But not everyone loved Jesus. To the Jewish leaders, He was a problem. He was a rebel. He flipped their religious system upside down after they had worked hard to build it and control it. To make matters far worse, He claimed He was God.

To the Romans, He was a rebel, an insurrectionist, an enemy to be controlled. Needless to say, not everyone loved Jesus.

Melissa →

After three years of proclaiming the Kingdom and showing Himself to be the promised King, the true Messiah, Jesus came into Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. The Passover was the holiday when the people of Israel remembered God's great saving act of rescuing them out of Egyptian slavery centuries before. Many people welcomed Jesus into the city, believing He was the King who would do the next great saving act of rescuing them from Roman slavery.

Meanwhile, some of the religious leaders made a plan to murder Jesus. They conspired with Judas, one of Jesus' twelve disciples, exactly how it would happen. Judas turned Him over to the Jewish religious leaders, and then to the Romans. They called Him a heretic and an insurrectionist. They demanded He be beaten and killed—not just killed, but crucified. Crucifixion was perhaps the most torturous, humiliating, and painful death methods ever devised.

So on a little hill outside Jerusalem they crucified Jesus. The one and true King of heaven and earth was murdered. Hanging there on a cross was the one many had been hoping, waiting, and longing for. The young Apostle John looked on in horror. Jesus' own mother had to watch. Jesus willingly hung on a cross and died . . . all according to plan.

Deb →

According to God's plan? Surely not! How could that be? Wasn't the plan that, as King, Jesus would ascend to an earthly throne and wear a crown of jewels, and every living creature would bow down before Him? The plan couldn't possibly have been Jesus hanging on a cross, wearing a crown of thorns, and having His enemies spit and curse at Him. If this was the plan, it wasn't a very good plan.

At the end of that horrible, dark Friday, the one and true King was now tortured, crucified and dead. He had become just another victim of Adam and Eve's original rebellion in the Garden of Eden, just like the rest of creation. He seemed to be no different. He was dead, just like all people eventually die.

However, God was still on His mission. The cross wasn't outside of God's plan to redeem and restore His creation. It was at the very center of God's plan.

David →

Here is how the Apostle John records this event in his Gospel account:

[Read John 20:1-10]

Steven →

Let me tell you what David just read:

Three days later, the following Sunday, some women went to the tomb where Jesus had been buried. But He was gone! They told His disciples, who ran as fast as they could to the tomb. The disciples found it . . . empty! Soon they would learn that Jesus was indeed alive!

And people saw Him alive again after His resurrection. A lot of people saw Him alive.

[Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8]

Mike →

The crucified and dead King was now alive and proved He was absolutely the one and true King. He did not end up a victim of the powers and effects of that original rebellion. He was not defeated by the death He had endured. He rose from the grave. He defeated death! He conquered the curse! He was and is the forever winner!

Jesus was alive. The one and true King had decisively defeated the enemies of the New Kingdom. A new day had dawned. What had been lost at Adam and Eve's rebellion in the Garden was now starting to be put right again.

NT Wright said, "Heaven is great, but it's not the end of the world!" What he means is, the hope of Christians is NOT a body-less existence, playing the harp, floating on clouds in a galaxy way far away. That is not Biblical in any form or fashion. That was the philosopher Plato's idea, not Jesus.

Resurrection is something completely different; it's more.
It is the body you now have...made new!
It is the earth we dwell on...made new!

Resurrection is not a neat add-on that validates Jesus, it is a new Genesis that is ushering in a new kingdom, on earth, that we can begin to see and get small tastes of now.

It changes who we are and how we see the world around us, it shapes our church community and love for one another; it changes what we care about in the world and how we care for the world. It makes even the small, every day things matter. The resurrection of Jesus changes everything.

The resurrection of Jesus is what gives us, and Christians everywhere, hope.

Because Jesus was raised from death to life, just as God promised, we can know and trust everything else God says to be true in the Bible:

- About who God says He is
- About who God says we are
- About what God says about our sin, our rebellion against Him
- About what God did through Jesus to pay for that sin and rebellion
- About how God raised Jesus to new life, and the hope we have in Him
- About who we as Christians are and are becoming now
- And about what we as Christians are to be and do until Jesus comes back again.

This is why we celebrate Easter, the Resurrection of Jesus:
Because He was raised to new, eternal life...and now we know we will be too!