

Acts Chapter 2 v 22 - 39

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[0 : 00] Good morning, Peter here from Whitby Evangelical Church. Thank you to Barry for leading us so far at the beginning. He sang some wonderful hymns we've read of that very first Easter Sunday morning when Jesus appeared, particularly to Mary, but then to the disciples too.

And again, though we cannot be together, we are one together by the Holy Spirit. And again, we can rejoice this Easter Sunday with the declaration that Christians have proclaimed throughout the ages as they've met one another.

Christ is risen, and with a response, he's risen indeed. Please would you turn with me in your Bibles, and we're going to read from Acts in chapter 2. We're going to pick up part of the sermon of Peter, preaching on the day of Pentecost, and particularly, of course, the very central message of Peter on that day was the Lord Jesus and his resurrection.

This is what Acts chapter 2 records for us. And I'm going to pick up from verse 22. Peter speaking to the Jews who were there on that day.

Fellow Israelites, listen to this. Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

[1 : 26] This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge, and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

David said about him, I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices.

My body also will rest in hope, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead. You will not let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life.

You will fill me with joy in your presence. Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day.

[2 : 24] But he was a prophet, and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne, seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay.

God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, and has poured out what you now see and hear.

For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

Therefore let all Israel be assured of this. God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah. When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the other apostles, Brothers, what shall we do?

Peter replied, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[3 : 43] I don't know whether you're a fan of TV quiz shows. There's a number of them on at the moment. There seems to be every channel during daytime. You can find one or more. I particularly enjoy quiz shows, which have general knowledge.

I don't think I do very well on Mastermind. Certainly not on University Challenge, but I like general knowledge questions. And sometimes I think I've got the answer almost straight away.

It seems too easy. But then of course, when the answer comes up, I'm shocked to find I was completely wrong. What seemed to be an easy answer was in fact much more difficult than I ever imagined.

People feel that they have all the answers about Easter, that they understand what goes on and what went on those 2,000 years ago. But people still have questions.

The questions that we're interested in answering. Questions like, did God really raise Jesus from the dead? How did God raise Jesus from the dead? But I want to answer one very deep question.

[4 : 47] A question that goes to the very heart of the Easter story. The heart of Christianity. The heart of what we believe. What we celebrate. What we rejoice in on Easter Sunday and throughout the year.

It's this question. Why did God raise Jesus from the dead? There's several answers that can be given. Very obvious answers in one sense for anybody who is a Christian.

And they come out particularly here in the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost which is what I've read from his sermon. Why did God raise Jesus from the dead?

Firstly, because God said he would. That's Peter's explanation of Psalm 16. That's the passage that we read there from verses 25 to 28.

It's the end of Psalm 16. A Psalm of David. But as Peter points out very clearly it can't be relating to David because David's dead and buried. A long time ago.

[5 : 46] A thousand or more years before this very day that Peter is preaching on. No. David is talking about the Messiah. The one who is to come. The Son of God.

Who would not die but be raised to life again. So why was Jesus raised to life? Why did God raise him? Because God said he would. God declared that he would.

God promised that he would. And that's exactly what he did. God always keeps his promises. If God says something, he does it. He's not a liar. He's not someone who says something boastfully but then never comes up with the goods.

He's someone who speaks and we can trust his word. Everything in Jesus' life was according to God's word. That's why when we get to Christmas, when we get to Easter, when we celebrate those great events in the Christian calendar, we often find in the Bible references to Old Testament prophecies, promises that God gave to his people that he kept to the very letter when it came to the life of Jesus.

Where he would be born in Bethlehem. Where he would grow up in Nazareth. How he would be treated by people. How he would suffer and die. How he would rise again. And so on and so forth.

Jesus is the fulfillment of all God's promises to his people.

[7 : 08] Dear friends, there's an immediate encouragement for us on Easter Sunday. God keeps his word. God is someone we can trust. God is someone who is faithful.

He said it. Therefore it's true. And therefore it will be done. Not just his promises concerning Jesus, but his promises concerning us who put our faith and trust in him.

He's promised to meet our needs. He's promised to forgive us our sins. He's promised to give us eternal life. He's promised to never leave us. We thought about those promises as a mountain of promises in the scriptures.

And we can take them and own them because the resurrection, no, they're true. Because just as God kept his promise to raise his son, so he keeps his promises to all his children.

But why did God raise Jesus from the dead? Because it confirms that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.

[8 : 08] It's the statement, the declaration for the world to see and to know that this Jesus was not just some man of mystery and myth, not just some madman or just some lunatic rabbi, but really was who he claimed to be, the Son of God, the Messiah.

That's why Peter says here, seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah. God has raised this Jesus to life. The whole of Israel was looking for and expecting a Messiah to come, a saviour, a rescuer from God.

Here he is. He's arrived. And it's Jesus, this humble carpenter from Nazareth, this man who seemed to be so insignificant, a man whose life and ministry was within just a small area on the surface of the Middle East.

This Jesus Christ is uniquely the Son of God, is appointed by God as the saviour of the world. And the resurrection confirms that absolutely 100%.

No other religious leader has risen from the dead. No other great man of God, even those who professed they had the power over life and death. No magician. No one has done this because nobody can.

[9 : 29] Because nobody else is God's saviour. Here's what Paul writes later to the Christians in Rome. He says, Jesus of Jesus, who was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead.

Jesus Christ our Lord. Do you believe that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead? There's no reason why you shouldn't.

Because the evidence and the proof is there. Again, we have eyewitness statements. Paul, sorry, Peter as he preaches, he says this, God has raised this Jesus to life and we are all witnesses to it. It's not just a story that I heard third hand down at the fish and chip shop the other day about so-and-so's dog and how it managed to chase a rabbit and catch it or whatever it is. It is true because there were witnesses, not just those disciples of Jesus who saw him, not only Paul on the road to Damascus who saw him, road to Damascus who saw him, not just them, but 500 at one time for 40 days.

Jesus lived and walked amongst the people and they saw him. Jesus had repeatedly told his disciples that he as the Son of Man must go to Jerusalem and suffer and die and rise again.

[10 : 45] Didn't understand it at the time. They understood it now because they'd seen him. Jesus kept his word. Why? Because he is the Messiah.

Our faith in Jesus Christ is not a mistake. It's not a misplaced faith. Sadly, we can do that. We can trust people who let us down.

We can take them at their word and then they never keep it either because they aren't able to or because they're never meant to. But Jesus is different. He is the one we can trust.

He is the one whom God has sent. He is the one who is the Saviour of the world. The one and only Saviour of the world. He said to his disciples in John 14, I am the way and the truth and the life.

He's not one amongst many. That's why the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday is a momentous event. He's the one alone. We must trust.

[11 : 45] Can trust. Should trust. God's grace. Why did God raise Jesus from the dead? Because he said so. Because it proves that he is the Son of God, the Messiah.

But also he raised Jesus from the dead because it's the guarantee that our sins have been forgiven. It's the seal of approval by God upon the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins.

It's God declaring that he was fully satisfied satisfied with the atonement that Jesus made to cover and take away our sins, to remove our sin from us.

That's why Paul writes again to the Christians in Rome in chapter 4. He, Jesus, was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. The word justification is a legal term that a judge might use for someone who's been accused of terrible crimes.

You're justified. In other words, that sin, that crime is not held against you. God raised his Son from the dead so that we might know that God has declared us justified, declared that our sins have been dealt with, declares that we are forgiven and that it's all been done for us.

[13 : 03] That's why when Peter preaches to these people and they are cut to the heart, we're told, and they say, what shall we do? Jesus assures them and tells them they need to repent first of their sin and be baptized as an act of faith in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins.

His resurrection is the guarantee that no matter what your sins or mine, no matter how many, no matter how ugly, no matter how terrible, no matter what our past or our guilt or our shame, the resurrection of Jesus, it tells us that there is forgiveness for us, complete and full and absolute forgiveness and that Jesus has borne the punishment once and for all and God has raised him to life to show that he is well pleased, that the price has been paid and the way to eternal life is open for us.

see, without the resurrection there would be no point in believing on Jesus. Without the resurrection our faith would be worthless, useless.

Without the resurrection we would remain unforgiven sinners. 1 Corinthians chapter 15 Paul is arguing for and declaring again the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection to come and he says if Christ has not been raised from the dead your faith is worthless, you are still in your sins but the fact that he has been raised from the dead assures us that our faith is not worthless but useful, our faith is priceless and costly, our faith is valuable and we're not in our sins anymore.

That's just some of the answers to that question. Why did God raise Jesus from the dead and each one of them gives us great encouragement to trust, to believe.

[15 : 05] But it also raises a slightly different question. Why didn't Jesus raise himself from the dead? I wonder if you've ever considered that question.

Why didn't Jesus raise himself from the dead? Without a doubt he could have done so when we think about the evidence and think about who he was and what he'd done. He was truly God. Paul tells us that in Philippians chapter 2 Jesus Christ your being in very nature God the very power of God was his.

He told his disciples that he had the power over his life to lay it down to die and to rise again. In John chapter 10 he said I lay down my life so that I may take it again.

No one takes it from me but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. The power of Jesus' life was in his own hands.

Our lives are not in our own hands. We're dependent upon others. We're dependent upon health. We're dependent of course upon God. We've got no power to give up our lives and take him back again but Jesus did and to prove it even more so of course on more than one occasion previously he'd raised those who were dead to life again.

[16 : 19] Think of Lazarus the most famous that dear friend of his after four days. Jairus' daughter just dead for a matter of moments. The widow of Nairn's son dead almost certainly for hours.

On his way to be buried and Jesus stops and the lad is brought back to life and given to his daughter given to his mother. We could add much more proof to show that Jesus could have should he have wished to raise himself from the dead but clearly again and again in every reference in the New Testament points to the fact that God raised him from the dead.

Even here as Peter preaches to the people he tells them verse 24 in his sermon you put him to death by nailing him to the cross but God raised him from the dead and here again in verse 32 God has raised this Jesus to life.

There's never a mention of Jesus raising himself. Is that significant? Yes I believe it is significant. I believe that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead when God raised his own son to life was the great declaration to the world of the love of the father for the son of the delight of the father in the son.

Think about it. Why did Jesus come into this world in the first place? He came because his father sent him. He made that clear especially through the gospel of John the one who sent me is with me I have been sent and we know that he came into this world by his father's will to serve and to do the father's work and to do the father's will and to speak the father's words the whole of Jesus' life was one act of a tremendous service to his father.

[18 : 10] Then when we think about the cross that was God's will for him too. It was the father's will that he should suffer and die. It was his father who on the cross placed our sin and punished our sin upon his own beloved son.

We looked at that just the other day when we talked about the man of sorrows. In Isaiah we're told the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. By his punishment we have peace.

We might look at the relationship between the father and the son and some have very wickedly and foolishly concluded that somehow to believe that God should punish his son was a wicked thing.

We might even come to the conclusion that God the father did not love his son to send him and to allow him and to treat him in this way but nothing could be further from the truth. Such was the love of the father for you and I and the necessity for Jesus to die for us that God did what he did to his son.

You think that God doesn't love you then think what God did that he might save you that he might rescue you but think on this as well. the resurrection is God the father's declaration to the world and to his son I love you.

[19 : 32] I am for you. I am with you. Remember those words of the father as Jesus came from the waters of baptism. He said here's my beloved son with him I am well pleased.

Now I am certain that the Lord Jesus Christ knew his father's love. He knew he was loved by the father. He spoke about it often. He was sure that his father was with him and was and loved him. But I believe that God the father wanted the world to know that his son was and is so precious to him. I don't believe it's because Jesus couldn't raise himself nor was it because he wasn't sure whether the father loved him or not though clearly on the cross as he suffered and died there was that incredible one off event in the whole of eternity when the father and the son were separated from one another and Jesus tasted the fullness of hell itself which is separation from God under his

wrath.

But it was the delight and the joy of God the father to raise his son to restore him and again to exalt him so we read here in Peter's sermon God has raised this Jesus to life and we are all witnesses of it exalted to the right hand of God.

The father is showing off his son to all the world and saying look at my son look what he has done for me and for this world look how faithful he is look how good he is look how wonderful he is and look how I love him.

[21 : 14] It is the great pleasure of God to prove and to show his love to his son and because the Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead we see as well how much God loves us how much he loves you and I what immense love he must have yes the love of God is demonstrated in the cross and in his death and the giving of his son there is no doubt to be so but in one sense there is also this wonderful glorious declaration of God's love for us in the resurrection he has raised his son for us that we might have confidence that we might know that we have life in him here is Peter as he opens his first letter praise be to the God and Father our Lord Jesus Christ in his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead God doesn't want you to be unsure of his love

God doesn't want you to be unsure in your faith he wants you to know that you are his child and that faith in him will never ever fail because he will never fail the very nature of our God is God who is a life giver how sad it is that for many people the idea that God is a fun sucker that he takes away fun that he takes away life that he robs life of its riches that he that he spoils our pleasures is so far removed from the truth of who he is he is a God who gives life and he gives life in the midst of death 2 Corinthians 1 9 Paul is talking about his own sufferings and difficulties he said these things happen that we might not rely on ourselves but on God who raises the dead being a Christian is someone who has experienced resurrection life in their dead soul life that has lifted them life that set them free life that has brought them into the very presence and relationship with God and being a believer is looking forward to with that assurance that

God will raise us from the dead that these bodies though they are feeble and frail though they are weak and corruptible and though they must and will die yet there is not the end but God will raise us up with resurrection bodies to enjoy his presence and that new heavens and that new earth for all eternity but the resurrection of Jesus Christ means something wonderfully real for us today as we live in this valley of death as we walk through this world of death in the midst of despair and death the resurrection assures us that God is able to deliver us I don't know what your situation is at the moment perhaps you are facing the loss of someone dear perhaps you're still recovering from the loss of someone you love perhaps you're in a circumstance and situation where you feel powerless where everything around you is dark perhaps even just the very circumstances of our nation and it's lockdown and the COVID-19 and you feel how can there ever be light in this how can there ever be life in this the resurrection of

Jesus assures us that even in the midst of the most awful blackness God raises up his people even that very great enemy of all humanity death is not strong enough to overpower the life that God has given us in Christ there's no situation so terrible so deep and so dark that God cannot raise us up out of it in life giving power no one is too far gone that they cannot be saved no one is so utterly destitute so utterly alone that Christ cannot meet with them no one is so lacking in strength and power as that the resurrection of life of Jesus cannot strengthen and empower them God dear friends this Easter time this Easter Sunday we have a living Saviour and a life giving God whatever circumstances we face no matter how far we are away no matter how dead in our sins Christ is able to give you life he is able to raise you up the God who raised Jesus will and does raise us up and therefore like Paul we can say in 2

Corinthians chapter 4 verse 16 therefore we do not lose hearts don't lose heart dear friends in these days though outwardly we're wasting away yet inwardly we're being renewed day by day the resurrection life of Jesus lives within us and is continuing and continually raising us up for our light and momentary troubles though they are vast and great are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all let's pray together Father we thank you for this resurrection day this Easter Sunday we thank you that in the Lord Jesus Christ we have one who is a living life-giving saviour we thank you oh Lord that on that day you declared to the world that sin is destroyed that hell is broken that life is for the taking we pray again that this

[27:18] Easter Sunday the very reality and power of what Jesus accomplished on the cross and what you guaranteed through his resurrection may fill our hearts with faith and trust that oh Lord we may walk in the power of Easter Sunday every day again our prayer is for our nation and our world at this time for those who are living in the very valley of death those that are fearful those that are scared those that are lonely those that are struggling Lord we pray for them Lord that just as Paul called those people on that day of Pentecost when they asked the question what should we do he said repent and believe in the Lord Jesus and so we pray that many people even today as they ask the question what should we do with this COVID-19 what should we do may call out to you the living God and find in you forgiveness and life and hope we pray again oh Lord that you'd be with our church family we ask you to especially be near those who are struggling with very poor and weak health we pray for those who are on their own that they may not feel alone but know the presence of the risen saviour with them thank you that you Lord Jesus the one who walked through locked doors can certainly be present in those houses and homes of your children we pray again oh Lord that in your mercy you would keep us looking up to you trusting and following you day by day until that day oh Lord when you come again and we see you in your glory once more we ask these things in Jesus name amen dear friends we're going to sing him together now in the tomb so cold they laid him with the wonderful chorus Christ is risen and then after that there's a children's craft if you want to do that boys and girls with a talk from Barry and again remind you please keep praying for one another please keep phoning one another please keep in touch and sharing with one another and God willing we'll meet again in the Lord's presence once more the Lord be with you always take anything thanks