

## **Christology- The States Of Christ (Part 1)**

### **Selected Scriptures**

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Well it's our joy tonight to return to our *Anchored* series as we walk through some of the great doctrines of the Bible, and we get to continue to focus on the person of Jesus Christ.

A number of years ago I read the story about Olga Romanov. Perhaps you have read about her as well. She was Russia's last Grand Duchess. When she was born in 1878 church bells chimed all across the land of Russia. She was the sister of Nicholas II, the last Czar of Russia. And as such, she enjoyed an amazing life of privilege. She lived in unbelievable opulence. In fact, the Imperial Palace had 900 rooms, and 5,000 servants. It was there that Olga, 14 years younger than her brother Nicholas, grew up. But then, of course, came the Revolution of 1917. She was one of the very few members of the royal family who survived execution by the Bolsheviks.

Olga and her family were initially given asylum in Denmark, but then after World War II ended, she left Denmark and she emigrated to Canada. In 1960, the year I was born, Olga died at the age of 82. Olga Romanov, the last Grand Duchess of Russia died in abject poverty. She was living, at the time of her death, in a small rented room above a hair salon in the rundown east section of Toronto. It's really an amazing story.

When we hear something like that, when we hear of someone who began with wealth and prosperity with all the advantages of life and then tragically lost everything, our hearts ache for such a person. Why is that? It's because in our concept of a fair and just universe, the story should always go the other way. The story should always be from rags to riches. No one should ever move, in our version of a fair universe from riches to rags. But what we will see tonight, is the most profound riches to rags story in human history. And what makes it remarkable is that Christ didn't lose everything through neglect or accident or embezzlement or revolution. He actually chose to leave the riches of heaven for us.

Theologians describe the Son of God becoming man in His incarnation, His suffering and death on a cross, and His being buried; they describe that as His humiliation. On the other hand, when they speak of His resurrection, His ascension into heaven, His being seated at the right hand of God- in what's called His session, and His return someday in glory and power- the Second Coming; theologians refer to that as His exaltation. And we refer to His humiliation and His exaltation together as the states of Christ. There was the state of humiliation, and then there is the state of exaltation. This is one of my favorite things to examine together, and I want us to do it tonight.

We begin with Christ's humiliation. The humiliation of Jesus Christ, and I want you to turn for most of our study tonight to Philippians 2. Philippians 2 describes both Jesus' humiliation and

His exaltation. It begins, of course, with His humiliation, and specifically the incarnation. And as we look at the incarnation, Paul begins with what Jesus, the Son of God, always was. Notice verse 6. Philippians 2:6, speaking of Christ Jesus, it says, "who, although He existed in the form of God." This marks the place where the riches to rags story begins. This marks the place where His condescension began. First of all, "He existed in the form of God."

Now, what makes this claim remarkable is that these assertions are about a man, and actual man, who lived on this planet in Israel during Paul's lifetime. I mean just try for a moment to imagine, if someone walked in here who looked like an ordinary man, but claimed to be God. That's what happened in the first century. Now, the text here in Philippians 2:6, literally says this, "*who continually existing in the form of God.*" "*Who continually existing in the form of God.*" There are a couple of important implications of that. First of all, it means that He existed before He was born in Bethlehem. Jesus didn't start His existence in Mary's womb and then being born in Bethlehem. And secondly, His full unabridged deity continued after the incarnation. Because Paul says, "*continually existing in the form of God.*"

Through the centuries, theologians have put it this way, "Remaining what He was, He became what He was not." Remaining what He was, God, He became what, prior to that time, He had not been, man. Now, look at the word, *form*, the "*form of God*", that Greek word is the word *morphe*. You recognize it, we get some English words from it. It doesn't speak merely of the outward form or appearance, but of that which corresponds to the internal reality. You see God has no outward form. God, John 4 tells us, Jesus tells us, "God is Spirit," and therefore, God is invisible, 1 Timothy 1:17. So when Paul says that before the incarnation, Christ was in the form of God, it cannot refer to anything external, to anything outward. There is no form externally to God. So it has to refer to what God is. Paul is here saying something remarkable about Christ. He is saying, He was exactly like God in His attributes. Which is another way of saying, He was God. If you share all the attributes of God, you are God. He always continued to exist in the *morphe* of God, in the form of God.

Secondly, Paul tells us here as He develops what He always was, he says He was equal with God. Notice verse 6 continues, "Although He existed in the form of God in equality with God". The Greek word for *equality* is the word *isos*, from which we get words like an *isosceles* triangle, a triangle where two sides are exactly equal. The Greek language has no better way to say that *Christ is exactly equal to God*. It's like the two matching lines of an isosceles triangle. Identical in person. Notice then, that's what He always was, notice Paul goes on to say what He chose. Verse 6 says, "Although He existed in the form of God," notice this, "He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped," verse 7, "but emptied Himself."

Let's look at those two expressions. First of all, "He did not regard equality, a thing to be grasped." Here Paul tells us, think about this for a moment, Paul tells us what Christ was

thinking before the incarnation. As He contemplated that reality. "He did not regard," He did not think or consider, "that His equality with God, was a thing," notice what he says, "to be grasped." To be held onto. In other words, Jesus was God, He was equal with God, He had the very attributes and form of God, but He did not treat His equality with God, and all the privileges that that equality brought, as a prize to be greedily clutched and held onto. Instead, He chose, while continuing to remain equal with God, remember that expression, continually existing as God in the form of God. While that continued, He chose to lay aside some of His privileges and humble Himself. He refused to selfishly cling to His rights and privileges as God at all costs. And that's why, that's why this is here in Philippians 2. It's an admonition to us to do the same thing; to have the same attitude. Not to cling to our selfishness and our own privileges and rights, but instead to live for others, to humble ourselves and live for others, just as Jesus did. So, "He didn't regard this equality with God a thing to be grasped." That's what He chose, but beyond that, "He emptied Himself." Notice what the text says, "He emptied Himself."

The verb, empty, is *kenoo*. It's the Greek word from which the theological word *kenosis* comes from. This one Greek word has caused more trouble through the years than almost any other word in the New Testament because it means, *to empty*. But it raises the question, Jesus emptied Himself of what? There have been some terrible, even heretical answers to that question. Some are well intentioned, like we sing a hymn by Wesley, *And Can it Be*, I love that hymn. But there's a line in that hymn that says this, "He emptied Himself of," what? "All but, love." I hate to tell you this, but that's not biblical. I have a hard time singing that line, in fact, I love the fact that in our new hymn book, it's rephrased to make sure that we're singing right theology. Because Jesus didn't empty Himself of all but love. The orthodox doctrine of the *kenosis*, of the emptying of Christ, is that Christ surrendered absolutely no attribute of His deity. So what did Christ actually give up in the incarnation? What did He empty Himself of? Here's what the Scriptures teach. In the incarnation, Christ emptied Himself in two specific ways. First of all, He veiled His pre-incarnate glory.

Turn to John 17, we read some of it this morning. It's such an amazing chapter, I'd love at some point to preach through it. John 17, but notice verse 5, as He prays on the night of His betrayal. He says, "now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." In other words, in the incarnation, when He became a man, that glory was not obvious and evident. He veiled His pre-incarnate glory. Don't misunderstand, He didn't surrender, He didn't give up His glory as God in the absolute sense, in fact, it shows up, right? In the transfiguration. You remember in Matthew 17:2, "He was transfigured before them and His face shown like the sun, and His garments became as white as light." So He didn't surrender His glory. He veiled His pre-incarnate glory.

Secondly, when we say He emptied Himself, we're saying that He voluntarily restricted the use of some of His divine attributes. In other words, He willingly chose not to constantly exercise

certain attributes except under the direction of the Spirit. In other words, He was going to live as a real man. He wasn't going to come to earth and cheat. And sort of, you know as a child, you can read some of the apocryphal gospels that aren't the truth, and aren't the way things happened, and you know they have Jesus, you know, using His miraculous powers to impress His friends. You can imagine Him saying, wow this is a hot desert place. If you've ever been to Israel, you know there's sections like that, I'm just going to sort of beam myself from one side of this hot area to the other. No, He didn't live like that, He lived just like one of us. He voluntarily restricted the independent use of some of His attributes. In other words, He only used those attributes under the direction of the Spirit. Again and again the Gospels talk about the Spirit directed Him here, and under the Spirit He did this. So the Spirit directed Him when to use those attributes for His ministry and not for selfish ends. That's what He emptied Himself of, the independent exercise of His attributes.

But, while all of that is true, that's probably not what, "emptied Himself," refers to here in Philippians 2. Because this word, *kenoo*, must be interpreted in light of the context of this passage. And here, Christ's self emptying is defined for us, it's explained in the following phrases. So let's look then as we continue in Philippians 2 at what Jesus became.

Verse 7 says, "taking the form of a bond-servant," here's how He emptied Himself in this passage. "Taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man." Those three expressions summarize what He chose to become. Let's take each of them individually, first of all, "taking the form of a bond-servant." The Greek word *form*, is actually the same word as back up in verse 6, the *form* of God. So what he's saying here is the same way that Jesus always had the characteristic attributes that distinguish God from everything else, He added to Himself the essential characteristics of a slave.

You say, what does that mean? Well, I hate to tell you this, but this isn't going to be very flattering. Here's what it means, when He took the essential characteristics of a slave, as God. It's, "being made in the likeness of men." For God to become one of us, that is what it was like. Now look at that word *likeness*. The word *likeness* speaks of a copy. An identical duplicate of the original. Christ looked and acted like a man because He was a man. In fact, Christ called Himself a man. For example in John 8:40, "you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth."

So why does Paul not just say Christ was a man, instead of saying "being made in the likeness of men?" It's because Paul is making a very important theological point. Christ was similar to us, but He was not absolutely like us. What was the point of similarity? The similarity between Christ and us was His full complete humanity. He was everything you are except for sin. He had and has a human body and He also has a soul. A human soul just as you have, He added that to His deity. He is everything you are, except for sin. And so that's the similarity. He was subject to

temptation, trouble, weakness, pain, sorrow, every human limitation. In fact, can I just kind of get off my notes here for a moment and say one thing I think is really important?

If you look at the life of Jesus between His birth and the time He started His ministry at 30, He experienced so much of what you and I experience, including the pain and suffering of life. Think about it, His Father dies while he is a young man. As a young man, some time after the age of twelve, He has to take over the family business, He is later called a carpenter. He has to support Mary and His younger siblings in that culture. He is like a parent, although the children are not His. And He teaches them and trains them and provides for them and cares for them; and yet, they rebel against Him, they don't believe in Him, they think He's out of His mind. Think of everything He experienced in those years. Full and complete humanity.

But although Christ was exactly like us in that way, He was not exactly like us. He was without sin. And, He never ceased to be equal with God. So, yes He was full and complete humanity, but He was at the same time full and complete deity. So, that's why Jesus became a real man, but He was not merely a man, that's why Paul says, "He was made in the likeness of men."

Paul adds another phrase to define what Christ became. It says, "Being found in appearance as a man." Appearance is the Greek word from where we get the word *schematic*. It refers to an outward form; that which makes something recognizable for what it is. In other words, Christ had the outward form, He had all of the outward characteristics that made it obvious that He was a man. In fact, He was so much of a man, that those who saw Him concluded, His enemies scoffed at His claims to be God. And, as I said, His own brothers didn't believe in Him until after the resurrection. So verses 7 and 8 make it unquestionably clear that Christ was fully human. Yet, Paul is equally clear that Christ continued to exist in the form of God exactly equal with God. He will forever be the God-man. God hyphen man because he is fully and completely both.

Then Paul moves to what he endured. After explaining what He became, he comes to what He endured. Verse 8 says, "Being found in appearance as a man. He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death." Becoming obedient to death. In obedience to the Father's plan, He chose death as His destiny; a destiny decreed before the foundation of the world. Remember He was a lamb slain before the foundation of the world. Christ's death was the final expression of His devotion to and obedience to the Father. Obedience that characterized His entire earthly life.

But, the descent of Christ, doesn't stop with death. Because Paul adds, "even death on a cross." Now understand, that's meant to shock us. It doesn't because we are so familiar with it, but in the New Testament times, polite Romans didn't even speak of the cross. It was a shame. In fact, I'll share a quote with you in just a few minutes, where they refer to it euphemistically. Why? Because the cross was the lowest you could go. You see, Christ didn't just descend to our level, to your level and mine, He went lower. The cross was lower than where we are because it was

reserved for the dregs of the Roman criminal justice system. For slaves, for rebels, and for terrorists. Those were the only people who could be crucified on the cross. Let me say it again, slaves, rebels and terrorists. The cross was reserved for the very lowest.

But more importantly than Roman culture, God had said in His Law that anyone who died on a tree, He Himself, would curse. Listen to Deuteronomy 21:23, "his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is cursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance." You see, the victim of such a death, was outside of Israel under the ban of excommunication, not just from the nation, but from all of God's covenant promises. Cursed by God. Christ became a curse for us by dying on a cross. That's how far down He came.

What are the implications of the incarnation for us? I just mentioned them. You can look these up in your own time, but here are the implications. Here's why it matters. In becoming a man, He has defeated the enslaving power of death. He understands you, and can represent you before God as your great High Priest. He satisfied the wrath of God for you, only One like us could stand in our place. He is able to help you in temptation because He understands. He faced temptation in this world. He redeemed you from the law's penalty by being born as a man under the law. He reconciled you to God. He sympathizes with your weaknesses. He remembers your frame that you're dust and He knows what that's like because He was in a weak, frail human body. He lived in a sinless, but a non-glorified body that knew all of those things. He has by coming shown you God. He has exeged God as John 1:18 says by becoming one of us. And He provided the supreme example of humility by putting your interests above His own. That's why Paul says here in verse 5, "Have this mind in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus." Those are the implications of the incarnation. And that is, part of His humiliation.

The second part of His humiliation is His suffering and His death. Louis Berkhof makes the following observations about the sufferings of Christ. Maybe you have never thought about this, but Christ suffered His entire life. His entire life was one of suffering. That's why Isaiah calls Him, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He suffered, not only in His body, which is how a lot of people think of the suffering of Christ, all the physical suffering, but He suffered in His soul as well. That's why in the garden He cried out, "Father if it's possible, let this cup pass from Me." His suffering resulted from several causes, let me just walk through them. Think about this, really think about this for a moment. The Lord of the universe had to occupy the lowliest position of one of His creatures. The perfectly pure Holy One, had to live in a sinful, polluted world burdened by the sins and guilt of His contemporaries. You know what that's like as a Christian in the workplace. You know how hard it can be as a Christian. Living in the middle of a fallen world, and all that you're exposed to. Can you imagine being the perfect, pure Holy Son of God? He knew from the beginning the extreme suffering at the end of His life and ministry.

You know, I am so glad I don't know what life holds for me. I am so glad that I can live and trust in God, and I know that He will give me grace. But can you imagine living your entire life of 33 years, knowing what's really coming at the end? Knowing how difficult that's going to be, he knew.

He endured the weaknesses and the struggles of human life here. He suffered the temptations of the devil, and by the way, not just those three at the end of the 40 days. He was tempted throughout those 40 days of the temptation, those three are representative, and the text of Scripture says that Satan came back to Him again and again and again. His whole life was a life of temptation. He endured the hatred and rejection of the very people He created.

Some of us, some of you have experienced what it's like to take for someone, to take them in, to have nurtured them from childhood and to have them rebel against you and reject you. Imagine what it would be like to be the Creator of the universe, and to have the people you created reject you. He was insulted, He was ridiculed, He was persecuted. So many different ways, His suffering came. His suffering was also unique. Why was it unique? Because of His moral perfection. Because of His sense of righteousness and holiness and truth. Can you imagine being one who is perfectly just, whose never done anything unjust, not one time in your entire existence, and being put on trial in a facade of justice, in a travesty of justice as He was? His sufferings were unique.

Also, He suffered in His temptations. I've already mentioned that, they're recorded for us in Scripture. He suffered, of course, in His death. His was a miraculous death. Think about it. It was miraculous in how he died; it was voluntary, He died when He chose. "Father, into Your hands, I commit My Spirit," and then He yielded up His Spirit. It was miraculous in what His death accomplished. It was efficacious. Remember, Jesus died shouting, "It is finished!" Something was completed by His death. And His miraculous death. It was miraculous because of why He died; it was substitutionary. Jesus died, and He really died, and suffered in His death, both body and soul. We're going to look, Lord willing, this coming Sunday, at the fourth word from the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He suffered body and soul in those six hours on the cross.

Now, Jesus died. What happened to Jesus when He died? I get this question from people from time to time, it's an interesting question. Where did Jesus go at the moment of His death? Let me tell you where He didn't go. He didn't go to hell. That's a late edition to the Apostle's Creed, it was not part of the early part of the Apostle's Creed. Where did He go? Well, think about this for a moment, His divine nature as God, continued to fill the universe and beyond. Because He never stopped being God. What about His human nature? Well, at His death, His body stayed on the cross was soon taken down and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, but what

about His human soul? Well think about what Jesus said to the thief. "Today, you will be with Me," where? "In paradise."

And then at the very end, He cries out at the final word on the cross, "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit." So His body stayed on the cross and was buried, His human soul entered into the presence of God. You see, Jesus became the pattern for what happens to us at death. "To be absent from the body, is to be present with the Lord." And that's exactly what happened to Him.

There's another aspect of His humiliation. We're not done, the cross was certainly the bottom point of His humiliation, but then came His burial. Look at 1 Corinthians. First Corinthians 15. I don't know if you have ever seen this or not, but in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says in verse 1,

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, [in other words, I am about to tell you the basic gospel. Now watch what he says, here it is verse 3], For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received [here's the gospel, notice the elements he includes. Number one], that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, [number two], that He was buried, [number three] that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, [and number four], that He appeared to... [many people after His resurrection].

He says those are the four basic elements of the gospel that you need to understand. So, the burial, the reality of Jesus' burial is part of the essential gospel message. In fact, listen to this, all four Gospels do not mention the birth of Christ. But all four of them do mention His burial. Why? What's the significance of the burial of Jesus Christ? Let me give you some reasons it's important.

Number one, Jesus' burial proves His credentials as Israel's promised Messiah. I want you to turn back to Isaiah because I want you to see this in the passage and not just on the overhead. Look at Isaiah 53. We love this passage and I suspect sometime around this season, I will read it for us, but I want you to see in verse 9. Verse 9 begins, of the Messiah, look back at verse 8. Verse 8 ends with His death,

For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due? [He was cut off out of the land of the living; he died. Now verse 9 says], His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death.

To be the Messiah, to qualify to be the Messiah, He had to die with wicked men, the thieves on either side, and He had to be buried in conjunction with a rich man. The Messiah, it was



prophesied would be exactly like this. So Jesus' burial, in the way that he was buried, proves His credentials as the Messiah.

Secondly, Jesus burial, stay here in Isaiah 53, secondly, Jesus' burial proves His innocence from God's perspective. Look again at verse 9, "He was with a rich man in His death," in other words, His burial would be connected with a man of wealth and influence, not with wicked men. Why? "Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth." In other words, total moral purity. God said, just to show that He wasn't wicked, I am going to let Him die with wicked men, because He's dying in the place of sinners, but I am going to make sure His burial happens with someone of influence and power to show that He was completely innocent. It proves His innocence from God's perspective.

Thirdly, Jesus' burial showed that He had to die for our sins. He could not merely suffer for our sins or simply, sort of cut His wrist and bleed for our sins, He had to die for our sins. He had to die for our sins, in our place. Look again at Isaiah 53:8

By oppression and judgment He was taken away [in other words, He didn't  
deserve it, it was a travesty of justice;  
And as for His generation, who considered  
That He was cut off out of the land of the living, [why?]  
For the transgression of my people, [for the rebellion of my people],  
to whom the stroke was due?  
His grave was assigned with wicked men.

It had to unfold this way because of His death for sin. His burial showed that He had to die for our sins. He had to die; therefore, there was a grave that followed.

Fourthly, Jesus burial shows that He willingly submitted to death, so that He might conquer it for us. Hebrews talks about this. That He could put to death our fear of death, by tasting it and by conquering it on our behalf.

A fifth reason for Jesus' burial is that Jesus burial certifies the historical fact of His death. Think about this, there were a number of witnesses of Jesus' death. There was the crowd that Luke mentions who went home from the crucifixion upon the announcement of His death. All of those people stayed until the soldier said, he's dead, and then they went home. So, they could all testify to it.

There was the women who watched where He was buried. There was Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus who actually requested the body, you remember, and then together, the two of them,

prepared it for burial. They put it in the tomb, so they could attest to the fact that He was dead. They prepared His body for the grave.

The centurion, and the other three soldiers, and Pilot who gave the official certification of Jesus' death, they all affirmed Jesus' death. And then you have the Sanhedrin, John 19:31 says, "Then the Jews because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken," in other words that their death might be hastened and then taken away and buried. So, they too, could testify to the death of Jesus Christ.

His dead corpse was placed in a grave. Why is that an important part of the gospel? Because it is evidence of His genuine physical death, Jesus really died. The spear of the Roman soldier had guaranteed it. The centurion to Pilot has certified it. Jesus was certifiably dead.

And that brings us to the final reason His burial is important and that is His witnessed burial identifies His specific tomb and thereby certifies one of the greatest evidences of the resurrection and that is the empty tomb. I mean, think about what God arranged that day. On that Friday afternoon at least three women witnessed where Jesus was buried. Likely the group was larger. Plus, a prominent, wealthy member of the Sanhedrin, Joseph of Arimathea, along with Nicodemus, the greatest teacher in first century Judaism, could testify first-hand to the reality of Jesus' death and His burial.

And Jesus' burial became a key piece of evidence in His authentic physical resurrection. Because one of the lines of evidence that convinced His disciples of His resurrection was what? The empty tomb. His body had been placed in a tomb, near where He was crucified. Everybody knew where it was, not only Jesus' disciples, but even Jesus' enemies. And even though it was sealed and guarded by the Romans on Sunday, the tomb was empty, and it still is.

Even Jesus' enemies, think about this. Even Jesus' enemies, who knew where the tomb was, never denied the empty tomb, and they never produced a body. God so arranged the circumstances of Jesus' burial, so that the empty tomb still rings out as one of the great evidences of the resurrection. He was buried. that's His humiliation.

And from there, we move to the exaltation of Jesus Christ. I just want to introduce this to you; the exaltation of Jesus Christ. Go back to Philippians. Philippians 2, I told you both the humiliation and the exaltation of Christ were here. We've worked through the verses that talk about His humiliation. Now look at verse 9, here's His exaltation.

Because He humbled Himself, because He emptied Himself, because of His willing humiliation, verse 9,

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.

This is His exaltation. Listen, because He humbled Himself, God is going to raise Him higher than anyone else. He has raised Him higher. And some day, "every knee will bow." Even His enemies, they'll bow in unwilling submission. "And every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord." Notice He's given in, "the name above every name." What is the name above every name? Folks, it's not the name, *Jesus*. You can meet people today, many people in our world who have the name *Jesus*. The name above every name is the name, *Lord*. And it's at that name that, "every knee will bow," and "every tongue confess that He is Lord."

Now, His exaltation consists, first of all, of the resurrection. And, again, I just want to introduce this. The resurrection. William Lane Craig wrote, "The real Jesus rose from the dead in confirmation of His radical personal claims to divinity. If Jesus did not rise, then Christianity is a fairy tale that no rational person should believe."

Is that true? Yeah, it is true. Paul himself said it, in fact, in 1 Corinthians 15, verses 14 and following, Paul records for us five profound and tragic consequences if Christ has not been raised. Turn there with me, 1 Corinthians 15. Here's how important the resurrection is. First of all, in verse 14,

If Christ has not been raised [there is no legitimate gospel], our preaching [he means the message we preach, the gospel we preach] is vain, [it's empty, it's worthless. He goes on in verse 14 to say, there is no reasonable faith. If Christ has not been raised, then], your faith also is vain.

If the message we preach is an empty message, then the faith you put in that message is an empty faith; there is no reasonable faith. Listen, if Christ hasn't been raised, then Christianity is a joke, and we should pack up our Bibles and head home. That's what Paul says. He also says in verse 15, if Christ hasn't been raised, there's no reliable revelation.

Moreover [he says], we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.

He's saying listen, think about all of the testimonies to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, all of them are false witnesses who should never be believed. What are these witnesses? Well

according to Paul, earlier in this very text, he says, the Scriptures. So you can't believe the Old Testament. You can't believe Jesus because Jesus talked about His resurrection. You can't believe the apostles because they talked about the revelation. In other words, the whole Bible is worthless, there's no reliable revelation if Jesus has not been raised.

There's no real forgiveness, verses 16 and 17,

For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless [and here's what he means by that], you are still in your sins.

Your faith didn't accomplish what you believed in order for it to accomplish and that is the forgiveness of your sins. There's no real forgiveness. Give it up. God is a holy righteous God, and there's no way for you to be right with Him. In other words, if Christ was not raised, then the Father did not accept the cross work of His Son. Because the resurrection, remember, was the Father's seal of approval. I accept it. Sacrifice accepted, work complete.

And there's no eternal life, verse 18,

Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

No eternal life for you and all of those people who have gone before you in death, who died believing in Jesus, nothing. No eternal life. They're doomed, they'll perish, they'll spend eternity separated from God, that's what Paul is saying. It all hinges on the resurrection.

So, let's begin to talk, just for a moment, about this resurrection. What was the nature of Jesus' resurrection? It was not simply His coming back from the dead to the normal human life that He had previously. In other words, it wasn't like the resurrection of Lazarus in John 11.

No, "Jesus came out of the grave," here's how Grudem puts it, "with a new kind of human life, a life in which His body was made perfect, no longer subject to weakness, aging, or death, but able to live eternally." That's the glorified body that He has that we saw in Philippians 3 this morning that some day, we get. That's the nature of the resurrection. Jesus' resurrection body was a real material body. It could be touched, there are a number of texts that talk about that, Matthew 28, John 20. He could eat and drink. John 20, you remember, He eats by the side of the lake there in Galilee. His body consisted of flesh and bones. He Himself said it in Luke 24, "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." This is the nature of Jesus' resurrection.

How was He raised? Who raised Him? Well, we saw this this morning, God, the Father, raised Christ from the dead. A number of texts make that point, but He also gave the authority to His Son to raise Himself from the dead, John 10:17-18. So, it was a work of the Trinity.

Why does it matter? What are the doctrinal, we've seen the practical consequences in 1 Corinthians, but what are the doctrinal consequences of the resurrection? What did the resurrection accomplish on our behalf spiritually? First of all, it secured our regeneration. First Peter 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again," there's regeneration. We've been born again, "to a living hope," how? "Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

As we saw in Romans 6, He was raised to new life, and in the same way, when you believed, you were raised with Him to new life. So, His resurrection secured your regeneration. It also secured your justification. Romans 4:25, "He was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised again in conjunction with our justification." He accomplished the work that allowed God to declare us just. And it also secured our resurrection and glorification. 1 Corinthians 6:14, "Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power."

Scripture presents a number of reasons for believing in the resurrection. In fact, there are nine biblical reasons, I just want to give you one or two of them and we're done. Here's why you should believe in the resurrection. We'll look at the others next time. First of all, the prophesy of the Old Testament. The Old Testament prophesied that the future Messiah would physically die, but that His body would not decay. Instead, He would be raised from the dead before the process of decay set in. Turn back to Psalm 16. Psalm 16, and notice verse 8.

I have set the Lord continually before me;  
Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.  
Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;  
My flesh also will dwell securely.  
[And here it is], For You God will not abandon my soul to Sheol [to the grave];  
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

In other words, there's going to be death, but before there's time for decay to begin, this person will be raised. Well if you go to the New Testament, if you go to the sermons in Acts, again and again, the apostles argue that could not have been spoken of David because David died, and his grave is with us to this day. It had to be speaking of someone else. Who was it speaking of? It was speaking of the Messiah, the One who died and on the third day, God raised Him. before decay really set in, He was raised.

There's a second biblical passage, look at Isaiah again, Isaiah 53. Maybe you've never seen the resurrection in Isaiah 53, but it's here. Isaiah 53, we saw in verse 9 about His death and His grave. Verse 10 says, "But the Lord was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering," there's the reason He died, as a sacrifice for sin, for guilt. If He will do that, notice what happens, "He will see His offspring," uh oh, wait a minute. He just died as a guilt offering. What do you mean He's going to see His seed? He's going to see those who believe in Him. That's an implication of the resurrection. And, "He will prolong His days." Again, clearly implying the resurrection.

Because of these passages, the earliest Christian creed that we just looked at in 1 Corinthians 15, speaks of the resurrection as something that happened, "according to the Scriptures." That's why the apostles quote, according to the Old Testament to prove the resurrection.

And then there was the prophesy of Jesus Himself, and we'll finish with this one. Here's why you should believe in the resurrection, the prophesy of Jesus Himself. On a number of occasions throughout His earthly life and ministry, our Lord predicted His own death and resurrection.

It starts in John 2. It starts at the very beginning of His three year ministry. You remember the story, He cleanses the temple, and the authorities say, wait a minute, who gave you the authority to do this? By what authority are you taking this on? Do you remember what He said? He said, here's my authority, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." And John puts in parenthesis for us, "He was speaking of the temple of His body."

In other words, Jesus said this to the authorities in Israel. You want to know by what authority I do this? It's by the authority of my resurrected life. In other words, Jesus Himself, at the very beginning of His ministry, staked everything He said, and everything He taught, and everything He did on the resurrection. He said, you want to know whether or not to believe Me? If you destroy this temple that is my body, and within three days, I am raised up, then you'll know that everything I said, and everything I claimed, and everything I taught, and why I say I am here to deal with the sins of man, that will be all true. And so, it is all true.

But, throughout His ministry, not just at the beginning, throughout His ministry, He said the same thing. Let's look at Mark's record briefly. Turn with me to Mark 8. On at least three separate occasions, our Lord made very clear what was going to happen to Him. Look at Mark 8:31. After that great confession by Peter, verse 31 says, "He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And He was stating the matter plainly." This is what's going to happen to Me, He said.

Go over to chapter 9, verse 31. "For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, 'The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.'"

Go over to chapter 10, verse 33. He says, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem," so this is right at the end. He says, we're going up to Jerusalem, and, "the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him," notice the specificity here in this prophesy. They will hand Him over to the Gentiles, now, it's not just going to be the Jews. They will mock Him, "and spit upon Him, and scourge Him, and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again."

Go over to chapter 14, verse 28. This is on the night of the Lord's Supper that it was instituted, just before His betrayal. Jesus, in verse 27, well go back to verse 26. At the end of the Last Supper, "after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, 'You will all fall away, because it is written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.'"

Do you understand what this means? Jesus said, this is going to happen, and it happened perfectly. Just as He said. Proving He is everything that He claimed to be. After Jesus' resurrection, both the angel of the tomb and the Lord Himself, referred back to these prophesies. In fact, turn to Luke 24. Luke 24:6, the angel says,

He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered His words.

Go over to verse 45,

Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures [these are the disciples gathered there], and He says, "Thus it is written [notice that, this is what the Old Testament says], that the Messiah would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

Folks, our faith is perfectly founded. Because it is founded on the reality of the resurrection. That means everything that Jesus claimed, and everything that He taught, and everything that He did for us at the cross, was accepted by God, and it's all true.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for Your word. Thank You for our Lord's gracious, willing humiliation of Himself. In the incarnation, in His suffering and death, and even in His burial. To go so low for us. But, we thank You that because of that, You have highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name. And that that exaltation began with the resurrection. When You put Your divine stamp of approval on Him, and on everything that He did by the resurrection.

Father, strengthen our faith through these truths. And I pray if there's anyone here tonight, who has never believed in Jesus Christ, that You would help them to see who He is. The reality of His claims that they're true, all confirmed by the empty tomb. By the resurrection, by His appearance to many. And Father I pray that they would repent, and believe in Him, even today, before their head hits the pillow tonight.

We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.