

Evangelistic Sermons

(Doctrinal Series)

by

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MESSAGE FOUR -

RESURRECTION

"If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (I Corinthians 15:14).

I always feel when I approach the subject of the Resurrection as though GOD were saying, "**Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground,**" and I bow with uncovered head in the presence of a subject wrapped round about with such divine glory and awful majesty and solemn, soul-moving awe as this one.

There are interesting subjects connected with the Christian religion, but there are none more interesting than the Resurrection. There are other important subjects. but hardly any so important as this one. for, "**If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain,**" and "**If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable,**" and this Gospel I preach is a fake and it isn't worth a half a hallelujah more than Buddhism or Theosophy or Unitarianism or Christian Science or any other system of ethics as a religion to save your soul and keep it out of hell.

You know Renan, the old French infidel, wrote up the life of JESUS and when he had brought it along as far as the Cross where JESUS died. Renan wrote the word "Finis" as if that was the end of it all, and the fellow who printed the book, his publisher, as unbelieving and even more bigoted than Renan himself, put on the fly-leaf after that lying, dismal word "Finis," a wood cut of the crucified Saviour. There He was, hanging on the Cross with drooping head and matted hair and pale, blood-streaked face. Everybody had deserted Him, the storm clouds had gathered in the sky and black-pinioned birds were circling through the gloom and everything about the scene spelled defeat.

Well, JESUS did die that way. But He didn't have to. One word from those silent lips of his and all Heaven would have rushed to His rescue. I think it was all GOD could do to keep them back anyhow. I think Michael pulled his sword and wanted to lead them on. I can almost see him and hear him. I can see him hang out over the ramparts of Heaven and shout, "Oh, JESUS, if you want us to come, just lift your hand and wave it; you can do it as easy as if it wasn't nailed. Nod your head, JESUS; just make some sign and there'll be something doing the world will never forget."

But JESUS said, "No, Michael, I can't do it; GOD and myself know why I am here and it's best for me to die." And He bowed his head and cried, "**It is finished**," and He was dead.

Yes, it was finished. But what was finished? The redemption of the world! And when Renan wrote that word, "Finis," he bore witness to a mightier truth than ever he dreamed. But he didn't mean it that way. He meant the thing was all up and that when they laid JESUS away in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea He rotted away like any other dead Jew.

And yet it was not finished. They laid Him in the tomb and they said, "We'll seal it and we'll put a Roman guard about it because He said He would rise. and we'll fix Him and show the world He was a faker." That's what they said and that's what they did. But do you remember about old king Chanute going down to the beach and commanding the tide not to roll in?

Well, that was a dead easy thing to expect compared with expecting that JESUS would stay in the grave when He had said that He would rise. For the bars of death could not hold Him.

Renan said the Resurrection of JESUS was a myth and that the theory of a resurrected GOD came out of the passion and strong imagination of Mary Magdalene, a hallucinated woman. And Strauss and Weissaker and Haeckel and a lot of other infidels and Christless unbelievers have said other things and done everything under GOD's Heaven to get rid of this fundamental thing upon which the whole superstructure of the Christian faith is reared.

No wonder the old Devil has trained all the heavy artillery of hell against this great fortress, for when it goes, the throne of GOD must fall, all Heaven must capitulate and it's all off with religion, and that would make hell howl with delight.

Now there are three questions I want to ask and answer about the Resurrection.

First. Could GOD raise JESUS from the dead?

Second. Did GOD raise JESUS from the dead?

Third. Why did GOD raise JESUS from the dead?

FIRST. COULD GOD RAISE JESUS FROM THE DEAD?

When Paul preached the resurrection those old Epicurean and Stoic philosophers up in Athens called Him a "**babbling**" and a "**setter forth of strange gods**." But Paul said, "**Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?**"

Now I am not going to waste any time with the so-called scientific arguments against the possibility of this thing. Admit GOD and impossibility must throw up its hands.

Most of the scientific objections to Christianity are born out of unbelief anyhow and when they are not, it is amusing to see how quick unthinking unbelief makes a fool out of itself by using them to knife religion, until some old tablet is dug up or something turns up and tells science where to get off.

You know the science of chemistry once analyzed man and found that the brain in its final

analysis culminated in phosphorus. My, how the discovery startled us! Phosphorus composed the Hallelujah Chorus, painted the Sistine Madonna and wrote Tennyson's "In Memoriam!" And then the wiseacres went on and had it doped out for us that phosphorus was the basis of everything. It was about this time that an old skeptic who always took great delight in trying to argue his old colored neighbor out of his faith thought he had him cornered at last and said to him, "Son, it's all up with your religion now."

"How do you make dat out?" said Son.

"Well, you say the Bible teaches that all the dead shall be resurrected and we have just found out that everything is made out of phosphorus and if all the millions and millions who have died and who are to die are to be given resurrection bodies, there won't be enough phosphorus to go around."

"Oh," said Son, "der's no difficulty 'bout dat! Don't de Bible say de dead in CHRIST shall rise fust? Dey'll be plenty phosphorus for dem what rises fust, but you and de oders like you will have to scratch 'round for your phosphorus."

I like that simple sort of faith in the Word of GOD anyhow. I like what Kuyper said, that great and learned Dutch statesman. My, but it's great! Listen to it. He said: "If then, after all legitimate examination and explanation there still remains (in the text) seeming inexplicables, *cruces interpretum*, before which not I - for that implies nothing - but all confessing theologians stand, even then I do not hesitate a moment to say in the hearing of the whole scientific world, that facing the choice between leaving this question unanswered, and with the simple-minded people of GOD confessing my ignorance, or with the learned ethical brethren from scientific logicalness rejecting the infallibility of Scripture, I firmly choose the first, and with my whole soul shrink back from the last."

No, my friends, the possibility of this thing we are not going to argue. Admit GOD and incredulity will vanish into thin air. Do you expect to limit the GOD who out of nothing created the Heavens and the earth! The GOD who hung the planets upon the air and sent them whirling and whizzing along their courses crossing a thousand tracks of other worlds with minutest precision! The GOD who flashed a ray of created light through a water drop sparkling with His glory and left it upon Heaven's transparent curtain half circled in all the bewildering colors of the rainbow! The GOD who made the inanimate animate and called into being every living thing, the author of life Himself! "**Why**," said Paul, "**should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that GOD should raise the dead?**"

Of course He could do it. And if He couldn't do it, then we haven't any GOD and that's all there is to it.

SECOND. DID GOD RAISE JESUS FROM THE DEAD?

DeWette, one of the great leaders of Rationalism, labored on this thing with the most precise and scientific investigation and he said, "The Resurrection of JESUS CHRIST cannot be called into doubt any more than the historical certainty of the assassination of Caesar." This is the statement that made Neander, the great church historian, shed tears when he read it.

The Old Testament prophesied the Resurrection of JESUS. JESUS said He would rise. But did He rise?

1. There was an angel there who said He did. He said to the women on that morning, "**I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen... Come, see the place where the Lord lay.**"

"Oh," you say, "that's all a lie worked up by the writers to pull the wool over our eyes."

All right; it takes more than an angel to make some people come across.

2. JESUS appeared eleven times after His resurrection. You say, "How do we know?"

I say, "The Bible says so."

You say, "The whole thing's a fabrication and the writers lied."

I say, "You belittle yourself for the want of good judgment."

Examine the account with a microscope and you can tell mighty quick, it's not a fabrication. Why did they represent a weak woman offering to carry away the body of a full grown man? If it was a lie that was to be manufactured and I had written it, I would have made her say, "Tell me where you have laid him and I will get a dray and haul Him away." Why did they make CHRIST fold up that napkin so carefully? I would have made Him tear it from His face, slam it into a corner and jump out on the run. And in a dozen other ways it's a mighty poor story if they made it up. Why did they write it up that way?

Because that's just the way it happened. That's why.

3. The Disciples said He did.

You say, "The disciples lied and knew they were lying when they said it."

Well, but the disciples died for it and it is strange they would die for what they knew was a lie.

4. The enemies of His resurrection have never been able to present one iota of evidence that He did not rise. The Apostles went up and down the land and hurled this doctrine into their very teeth and they never peeped except to say the disciples stole the body. And that's a fool thing to say, as I'll show you in a moment.

5. Now if JESUS did not rise from the dead how are you going to account for the empty grave?

If all the infidels on this side of hell were to go into session for the purpose of exploding and overthrowing the resurrection of JESUS I could hurl the empty sepulcher into the midst of their diabolical deliberations and utterly confound and confuse them.

The Empty Grave! Say that, and you have them going. For they all have to admit it. The most bitter opponent does. Even old infidel Schenkel says, "It is an indisputable fact that in the early morning of the first day of the week following the crucifixion, the grave of JESUS was found empty."

Well, then, if the grave was empty and there was no resurrection, either His friends or His foes took the body away.

Of course, His enemies didn't take it away; for if they had, they would have produced it as the most effectual way of shutting the mouths of the Disciples who were preaching everywhere that GOD had raised Him from the dead.

Let us look, then, at some of the theories the infidels advance to get rid of the Resurrection. There are three of them.

I. Some of the infidels and critics of the Resurrection say the disciples stole the body and then deliberately tried to deceive the world. That's the bluff the Jews tried to get away with. **"They gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept."**

But that's a fool argument. These disciples laid down their lives for this thing and no man would die for what he knew was a lie. Men will die for error, but not for what they know is a fake. Men lay down their lives for what they believe. Even old Strauss says, "This much must be acknowledged, that the apostles firmly believed that JESUS had risen."

Come again, Mr. Infidel.

II. Well, some of them say He never died. He was just in a swoon. The odor of the spices and the cool air of the tomb revived Him and He came back and got up and left the tomb.

But there are four arguments that knock this old swoon theory into a cocked hat.

1. *It makes a history out a joke.* In the first place, old Strauss put it right when he said that a man who crept forth half dead from the grave and crawled about a fit subject for a hospital could never have so impressed His disciples that He was the conqueror of death and the grave as to have made their moral transformation one of the marvels of the world.

2. *It makes the disciples out a set of consummate fools.* They recorded all sorts of things about Him after His resurrection that couldn't be true of Him if He came out of the tomb with the same physical body He had when He entered it.

3. *It makes JESUS out a fool.* Do you suppose for one minute that JESUS would risk the founding of a religion which He expected to sweep around the world and which He knew would arouse the keenest antagonism of those hard-headed Jews and the criticism of Gentile philosophy and challenge the dictum of science, upon a statement so flimsy and so easy to have a hole knocked through it as that? Give Him credit for a little sense anyhow.

4. *It makes JESUS out an unprincipled monster.* The disciples thought He had died, but He knew He hadn't. And yet this thing that remolded their lives, this thing that furnished them the ground of their hopes, this thing they depended upon to convert the world, this thing for which they laid down their lives, He knew was a lie, and yet He never told them. You can't put anything over on JESUS like that. You must admit He was decent, if nothing else.

Come again, Mr. Infidel.

III. Well, some of them say the disciples had a brainstorm. They were hallucinated. They thought they saw Him, but they never did. This is the famous Vision Theory.

The Hallucination Theory is a better name for it. Old Renan and Strauss are the biggest guns back of this theory.

Well, when you're talking about absurdity, you've got to go some to beat that. It's the limit. You can prove its absurdity in a dozen different ways.

1. *If it was only a vision, how did it happen at times to last so long?* Visions are usually over in a minute and at most a few minutes, but the walk to Emmaus and other appearances lasted for hours. The theory's absurd.

2. *He appeared to the disciples at the same instant and 500 saw Him on one occasion.* Who ever heard of this many people having the same vision at the same time? These old infidels deny one miracle and want us to substitute 500 miracles in its place. The theory's foolish.

3. *If they were visions, how did they happen to end so suddenly?* Hallucinated enthusiasm don't usually work that way. You'd expect more glorious visions and more frequent ones as the time went on, especially round about the time of Pentecost when people were so wrought up and in the days of persecution when they especially felt the need of His presence. But at the end of forty days they suddenly stopped. The theory's silly.

4. *After the disciples found out He had really risen, they expected Him to appear in Galilee.* The angel and JESUS Himself said He would and yet that very night He appeared to them at Jerusalem. If the so-called appearances were only visions and so depended on the mental state of the disciples how are you going to explain this? It's up to you. The theory's nonsensical.

5. Any one of these arguments blows your Hallucination theory into smithereens, knocks it into a cocked hat, whips it to a frazzle and puts it out of commission. But say, Mr. Sceptic, here's one that will get you. If, as Renan says, the hallucinated imagination of Mary and the disciples gave to the world a resurrected GOD, how are you going to account for the fact that in spite of what JESUS said about His resurrection they were not expecting Him to rise.

They went on the third morning to the tomb to anoint a dead body, not to behold a risen Lord.

When they found Him gone they did not even think of Him as risen and Mary said to the disciples, "**They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him.**"

When the disciples were told of His resurrection it is said "**They believed them not.**"

The two disciples on the way to Emmaus after they had been told of His resurrection, told CHRIST all that had happened but said they did not know what had become of JESUS.

And finally when He did appear instead of grasping at the fulfillment of their so-called dream and hallucination, it says, "**they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.**"

Hallucination; nothing! The theory's a joke. The trouble is with the fellow who got it up. He had something worse than hallucination of the brain. And yet you'll find a lot of little cap and gown professors in our universities today, and colleges and schools, and, alas, in some places of ecclesiastical learning, who in their inordinate desire to get rid of the supernatural will pump that stuff into their students as the brilliant conclusion of their own self-estimated colossal and stupendous intellect.

Talk about being progressive! They're nothing but theological crawfish, crawling back to Renan and Strauss and back to Porphyry and Celsus and other old destructive critics of ten centuries ago. There's nothing to it. JESUS did rise from the dead. Mrs. Eddy says He didn't die, but was alive in the tomb demonstrating the truth of Christian Science.

I suppose that's what she's doing now, But she's not getting there quite as fast as He did. Some of her followers said she'd rise, but you know what Billy Sunday said he would do if she did.

THIRD. WELL, IF GOD COULD RAISE HIM AND IF GOD DID RAISE HIM, WHY DID GOD RAISE HIM?

For four reasons.

1. *He did it to make good the word of His blessed Son and to establish once for all and beyond all doubt the truth of His glorious divinity.* I read in Romans, 1:4, that CHRIST was "**declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.**"

If, as the English poet says, the Syrian stars look down every night upon His grave, how are you going to explain His repeated claim that He would rise on the third day, except that He was a liar or a lunatic.

He asked the Jews why they were stoning Him and they said, "**For blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.**" Well, He did claim it and if He was in His right mind it was either so or it was the rankest blasphemy. And JESUS said He would prove it by His resurrection and GOD had to raise Him to make good His word and so prove Him to be what He claimed He was. Where does Unitarianism get off in the light of the Resurrection? To perdition with the idea that JESUS CHRIST was only a good man.

2. *He did it to furnish every believer the God-given assurance that he is justified in Christ Jesus.* It says in Romans 4:25, that Jesus "**was raised again for our justification.**"

You know JESUS said He came to "**give His life a ransom for many**" (Matthew 20:28); that He would die to make atonement, and He did. But if GOD hadn't raised Him from the dead we never would have known that the atonement was accepted, and so, He "**was raised again for our justification.**" And it doesn't make any difference how much you have sinned in the past, GOD will count you righteous for CHRIST's sake if you want Him to, but there's no way to escape the damnation of hell if you turn your back on JESUS CHRIST.

3. *He did it to let men know that there isn't any doubt about the judgment to come.* Paul said, God "**hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man (Jesus Christ)... whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.**"

You know JESUS said the hour was coming when the dead would hear His voice and rise, "**they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.**" And they laughed and called Him a fool and GOD put His own seal on the claim by raising Him from the dead. There's nothing more certain in GOD's universe than that there's a judgment day coming!

Oh, you say you don't care for the judgment! No! But you won't be in it two minutes until you'll change your mind so quick it will make your head swim.

You're like the white fellow that beat the Negro into town. A couple of boys had gone for walnuts and coming home climbed the stone wall of a cemetery to divide them and in getting over they dropped two on the outside. A colored fellow came along a few minutes later and heard them counting them out. One of them said, "I'll take this one," and the other one said, "I'll take this one," "I'll take this one," "I'll take this one," and so on. He went tearing into town and ran into a white man and nearly knocked him down. "Befo' de Lawd, Massa," he said, "de resurrection mornin' am come and de Debil and de Lawd am out in de graveyard dividin' up de dead."

"Oh, Son," said the white fellow, "you're nutty; you oughtn't to be so cowardly anyhow."

"Well," said Mose, "come on out here and you can hear it for yourself."

They went back and listened with their ears close up to the wall, and they heard the voices saying, "I'll take this one, I'll take this one, I'll take this one, I'll take this one." Just then they finished and one of them said, "Now we'll get them two on the outside and we'll be done."

And the white man beat the colored fellow by four blocks into town. Oh, no, you wouldn't care for judgment? You're a brave one, you are.

4. *He did it so that every one united to JESUS CHRIST by faith may know that they also are going to be raised from the dead.* Do you remember what Paul said about the resurrection? He said, "**Christ the first fruits: afterward they that are Christ's at His coming.**"

I know the Devil sometimes gives you a good run for your faith and maybe you begin to doubt a

little. You go and stand by the grave and see the coffin go down and something seems to say, "Will I ever see the dear one again?" And your own heart says, "No." Everything around you says, "No." Then you think of the words of Paul, "**If ye believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him,**" and you brush away your tears and you hear the voice of JESUS say, "**I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live,**" and, "**Thy brother shall rise again: thy father shall rise again: thy mother shall rise again: thy sister shall rise again,**" and you thank GOD and sorrow not as others who have no hope.

Everything depends on the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST. That's the corner stone upon which the whole superstructure of Christianity rises: undermine it and the whole business drops. It's the keystone of the arch: knock it out and the whole thing falls with a crash.

If JESUS CHRIST did not rise from the dead, how do I know that He is the way, the truth and the life?

How do I know that he that believeth on the Lord JESUS CHRIST shall be saved?

How do I know that the blood of JESUS CHRIST cleanseth from all sin?

How do I know that He has gone to prepare a place for me and that He will come again and receive me unto Himself?

How do I know that death has lost its sting and the grave has been swallowed up in victory?

How do I know that the SPIRIT of GOD who raised JESUS CHRIST from the dead shall also quicken my mortal body?

How do I know that when He shall appear I shall be like Him?

How do I know that "**the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in [me].**"

How do I know that the promises of this Book are worth any more than the ink it took to print them or the paper it takes to hold them?

I don't know. There's no way to know. If JESUS CHRIST did not rise from the dead then I have nothing to do but to take a chisel and a hammer and go out to the grave of my loved ones and chisel away the beautiful words, "**I am the resurrection and the life,**" and cut in their place the cold, icy and heart-breaking words, "I do not know; I have no way to tell." "**If Christ be not risen,**" Paul says, "**then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain**" and "**we are of all men most miserable.**"

But thank GOD He did rise. They sealed His tomb, but it couldn't hold Him. He lay there cold and dead in the grave. All earth had given up hope, but all Heaven knew better. I think Gabriel must have said to the celestial choir, "Hold your breath a minute now, for you'll need it," and as the minute of the world's mightiest miracle ticked off the breath of GOD swept through the

sleeping clay and like a flash of light His glorious Son was on His feet again, while Heaven's angelic choir rose tier upon tier and row upon row and shouted, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah!! Hallelujah!!! CHRIST is risen; The Son of GOD is alive!!!"

Glory to JESUS!

"Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes.
He arose a victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever with His saints to reign.
He arose! He arose!
Hallelujah, CHRIST arose!"

He's up there now at the right hand of GOD pleading His atoning death for you and me.

Don't you feel like waving Him a Chautauqua salute, and saying, "Hurry, JESUS, and come back again." For when He comes again even those also who are asleep in Him will He bring with Him, and what a day that will be."

Excuse the personal reference, but I can't help it. I saw the place where they laid Him. All four of the Gospels say it was a new tomb, and it was. In fact it was unfinished.

The golden sunlight was streaming in through the open door, for the stone was not there. The Bible says, Peter stooped down and went in and so would you have to stoop if you entered. I saw four niches for members of Joseph's family that had never been occupied and one commenced but never finished and then I looked into the place where I believed my Saviour to have been laid, but Hallelujah! He was not there; He had risen. I can seem to feel the tears running down my cheeks now as they did then in that solemn presence.

I bowed myself and how long I stayed I do not know. But I said. "Oh, empty tomb of CHRIST, tell me something of that strange morning," and it said, "Biederwolf, it was strange, indeed. Outside the birds were singing their morning carols and the sun was just shooting his silver arrows through the gates of the eastern skies, but in here it was all dark and quiet and suddenly it seemed as if the blazing sun itself had dropped into the tomb and two angels appeared.

"One sat down quietly at my head and the other at my foot. Then the earth shook and I heard something snap like the breaking of a seal and the stone commenced to roll back and JESUS who had been lying here cold and dead for three days and nights stirred and stood up. He didn't make any fuss about it. He first took the napkin off His face and said. 'Good morning. Gabriel. Good morning. Michael.' He formed the napkin and laid it by itself and then took off the linen grave clothes. He said, 'Gabriel, stay here. Michael, stay here and tell the women when they come to anoint my body, what has taken place; I'll see you a little later in the Father's house,' and just as He started through the door He disappeared and was gone.

"It certainly was a strange morning. When they hewed me out of this old rock I never expected anything like that!" And I said, "Thank you, old tomb," and after I had waited long enough to ask GOD to help me be a better man I stooped through the door and walked away and I said, "GOD pity a man who has no resurrected Saviour; GOD pity a man who has no living hope and who

has no faith."

I've been living for Him now for thirty years in my faltering and stumbling way, but I am walking with my face toward Heaven where I shall one day see Him and I want you to come and put your hand in mine and promise GOD you'll walk with me until our journey ends in the glory lit presence of the throne of GOD.

~ end of chapter 4 ~
