

Easter

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- [0 : 0 0] There is only one question that makes any difference insofar as the resurrection of Christ is concerned, and that question is this. Is it true? Nothing else matters other than that.
- And regardless of how you answer that question, whether you believe it to be true or not, the implications and the consequences of that are really significant.
- I won't go into detail regarding them because I'm sure you're already aware of that and you can think them through very quickly. If there is no resurrection of Christ, then thus and so are the consequences.
- And if there is, thus and so are the consequences. Today we're going to take a little different approach to the subject of the resurrection. And I, as usual, have some propositions that I want you to consider before we actually get into the text of the message.
- And by and by, I hope to spend a few minutes in each of the resurrection accounts of the Gospels. Whether or not we get to John, I'm not sure.
- [1 : 1 3] But we will at least cover the synoptics. And there is one thing in particular that we're going to be looking for. And that is the varied emotional responses. There is a great kaleidoscope of human emotions in connection with the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Only human beings appear to be endowed with an ability of emotion or feelings. This suggests to me that we are able to experience the events of life on a different plane than other creatures.
- Man alone is able to process events and register a telling response that corresponds to what he is experiencing in an emotional or outward expression.
- In mentally processing the event we are experiencing, we derive conclusions that reveal we understand the implications and the ramifications of what we are experiencing.
- This is all a profoundly human privilege and is no doubt related to our being created in God's image with his likeness.
- [2 : 3 9] Now exactly how that translates from the deity to humanity we do not know. There is a sense in which we have a God-likeness to us because we are created that way.
- But make no mistake about it, there is nothing about us that is God or that is deity. But there are things about us that bear a resemblance to that.
- And I think that is what is meant by saying we are created in God's image and in his likeness. We do not know that God has emotions or feelings, certainly not of the kind that we have.
- But if you would indulge me for just a moment about a dab of theology, there is something about the Almighty that is described in human terms, and these are called anthropomorphisms.
- I know it is a big word, but it is simply a compound word that takes the word anthropos, from which we get the word anthropology.

[3 : 52] Anthropology is the study of man. And the other part of the word morph[■] is the word from which we get the word shape or form.

So when you put these together, it simply means that there are things mentioned in Scripture referring to God that are called anthropomorphisms.

And that means that certain physical characteristics are attributed to God, not because he has them, but because it enables the Almighty to communicate with us on a level that we can understand.

And when the Scriptures say that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro on the earth, it's not talking about a huge set of circular eyeballs out there running around the earth.

When it says that the arm of the Lord is not shortened, that it cannot save, or that we are engraved in the palms of God's hand, it doesn't mean that God has arms and hands and feet as we do.

[5 : 05] But in order to understand something about the Almighty, language has to be reduced to that which humanity can grasp.

And not only is it that way with physical characteristics, but it's that way with feelings and emotions. Only these are not called anthropomorphisms, they are called anthropopathisms, from which we get the word pathos.

the idea of feeling or emotion. So, by the same token as the physical, I would say that this does not mean that God has feelings like human feelings, of elation, or sadness, or deprivation, or anger, or whatever.

Now, I'm not saying that he does not have something similar to that, but it is on the divine level. It is not the same. God does not have human emotions.

But I am not saying that God is without emotion. I am simply suggesting that there is a sphere, or a level of emotion, that belongs to the deity, that transcends humanity.

[6 : 23] And perhaps, whatever the equivalent of human anger, or human feeling, joy, gladness, sadness, whatever, whatever the divine equivalent of that is, God has that.

So, he is not without feeling on his level. There is no indication that angels have any emotional responses at all.

We do not have records, none that I can recall, where angels are ever weeping, or angels show remorse, or regret.

Again, I may be out of my bailiwick here, but I'm just trying to recollect what I read about angels in the scriptures, and they are utterly different from human beings.

Favorite line of angels, upon making themselves known to whomever here on earth, always seems to consist of two words. Fear not! Because it seems to be the most natural human response every time someone is confronted with an angelic being.

[7 : 42] You know this is an otherworldly being. And it is a terrifying thing, as we will see shortly. We just can't imagine what it would be like to be emotionless.

But I suspect that that's what angels are. Years ago, there was an old TV series that virtually developed a cult-like following.

Are there any Trekkies here? Oh my, yes. Uh-huh. Well, I do not consider myself a Trekkie, and no, I never even saw the movie. I know you who are Trekkies can't imagine that.

But I do remember watching at least a couple of episodes when Tim, who was a teenage son at the time, probably a young teenager, cajoled me into watching them with him.

And they're in this starship and they're out in space and they go where no human being has ever been and all of this kind of nonsense. Well, there was one particular character that I was amused by.

- [8 : 49] He was a guy with the pointed ears. Do you remember him? Leonard Nimoy. Nimoy. Yeah. Mr. Spock. And the fascinating thing about Mr. Spock was he had no feelings. He had no emotions. And every time something would happen or they were trying to choose a course of action or something and Captain Kirk would come to Mr. Spock for his opinion or he'd give him his opinion and Captain Kirk would say, well, why this or why that?
- And he would say, it's logical, Captain. It's logical. And he always just operated on the basis of pure logic. No emotion, no feeling, no pathos or anything.
- Just pure logic. We're not made that way. We are not wired that way. That is not. Part of what part of what describes our humanity is that we are gifted and capable of displaying a great range of emotions.
- From elation, cloud nine stuff, to the depths of depression and despair and everything in between.
- [10 : 08] Can you imagine what it would be like to have no emotions, to have no feeling, just to be completely emotionally neutral about everything?
- Can you imagine, can you imagine here in the United States of America, a couple of hundred million Mr. Spocks running around?
- Wouldn't it be a terribly dull world? Emotions, feelings are the spice of our humanity. humanity. They are the things that keep us involved and keep us active and keep us up and down and in many instances, depending on what's taking place in our lives, we can be like an emotional yo-yo.
- But we have that capability. The last 72 hours of our Lord's life on earth produced every emotional response known to man for those who were close to him.
- The agony of experiencing the crucifixion and the witnesses thereto represented one extreme. It was the extreme emotion of deepest sorrow and agony followed by a profound sense of despair and disillusionment.
- [11 : 42] I can only imagine what was going through the minds of the disciples, particularly the apostles. Mary, his mother, as they stood there in that Judean sun and watched this one writhing in pain and agony on that cross.
- The disillusionment no doubt had to come from how can this be? How could this possibly happen?
- How could God allow it to happen? any minute now I'm going to wake up and find that this is all a terrible dream.
- But the dream went on and it revealed itself to be no dream but hard core reality.
- There he is. Look for yourself. Crown of thorns, wound, bruised, broken body, facial characteristics so abused you could hardly identify them.
- [13 : 17] No denying it. That is the hard core reality. And then three days later, it is followed with the most profound elation that anyone could ever experience.
- And it is this elation that we want to focus on this morning and I want you to turn to Matthew chapter 28 and verse 1. Matthew chapter 28.
- Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.
- and we are told in other passages that they were bringing with them an abundance of spices and aloes because you see, when Jesus was taken down from the cross, it was only because of the sensitivity of time.
- The Jewish Sabbath was quickly approaching and it was unthinkable in the Jewish mindset that a body could remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day.

[14 : 22] So it became imperative that they get that body down as quickly as possible. They went to Pilate and asked if they could have the body, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

Pilate was somewhat amazed that Jesus was dead already because actually he was only on the cross for six hours and the reason he was dead at that time I think had to do with so much of the torture and punishment he was subjected to before he was ever placed on the cross.

Make no mistake about it. He was dead. Roman spear in the side could have removed any possibility of doubt as to whether or not he was actually dead.

And that being the case they didn't have time to prepare the body as they wished because that would have encroached upon the Sabbath.

So they just hurriedly wrapped the body in the shroud or linen cloth and put it in the tomb with the intention of coming back after the Sabbath was concluded and then care for the body.

[15 : 32] Literally embalming it wrapping it with the spices and aloes and everything that went with it. And we are told in verse two a severe earthquake had occurred now this was in connection with our Lord's crucifixion.

The darkness had settled over the earth and the earthquake and the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it.

And his appearance was like lightning and his garment as white as snow. Similar descriptions are given of these angelic beings in other places.

Dazzling raiment and always just a kind of matter of fact attitude. I can promise you this. When the angel rolled away that stone he wasn't laboring grunting and groaning like you or I would be if we put our shoulder to something and tried to move it.

This was if I may say a piece of cake for this angel. He just rolled it. He might have even done it with one hand. And angels are spirit beings who apparently have the ability to assume a human form because in many instances they are mistaken for a fellow human being.

[16 : 56] Very often it is their attire that gives them away. This brightness, this whiteness about them. And here is a nice emotion. The guards shook for fear of him.

This angel, whatever he looked like, didn't look like your average human being dressed in a white bedsheet.

He had some appearance, some aura about him that stunned these Roman guards. And these Roman guards were not a bunch of pansies.

They were used to dealing with extreme situations. And I would imagine that they just took one look at this being. No reason to believe he was armed with anything.

But they just took one look at this being and came to an immediate conclusion, I don't know who or what this is, but I don't want to tangle with him.

[18 : 01] And we are told that they shook and trembled, became like dead men. the idea is they become traumatized, paralyzed, just frozen in their tracks, trying to make some sense of this, and even in fear of their own life.

And the angel answered and said to the women, I think that's neat. He didn't have anything to say to the guards. He had no message for the guards, but he did for the women.

And he says, do not be afraid. Some translations, I think the King James renders this, fear not. Like I said, that's their favorite line, whether they appear to Joseph, or whether they appear to Mary, or whether they appear to somebody else.

They always begin with that fear not, because everybody, apparently, upon seeing them, their first manifestation of this angelic being is sheer terror. What is this?

Who is this? Is my life in jeopardy? Am I going to live or die or whatever? And it was just a complete spellbinding, rapturous capture of heart and mind and emotions, and nothing worked.

[19 : 15] They are just trembling and absolutely terrified. And he says to the women, do not be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus, who has been crucified.

He is not here, for he has risen just as he said. And I love this next line.

I just love this. Come, see the place where he was lying, which could also be translated, come over here and look for yourself.

Here's where his body was reposed. What do you see there now? Nothing. Just empty grave clothes.

He's not here. And then, he is risen just as he said. And then we have urgency.

[20 : 23] And go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead. What's the hurry? Why go quickly? Good news is good news, but it'll keep till tomorrow.

Why go quickly? I think this is just a consequential act of a compassion. I don't know if the angel was ordered to say that, or if angels have an emotion, contrary to what I said earlier.

But I know one thing. anybody who was close to Jesus and had put their hopes and dreams in him, and then he is risen from the dead, you couldn't get that information quickly enough.

there isn't anything that could relieve a broken heart, a wounded spirit, a crushed soul, somebody whose morale is just so low, and the level of sadness and deprivation is so powerful, they are just feeling all of these tremendous negative emotions, never had a human being experience pain like they were experiencing.

And there's only one thing that can turn it all around and change it. And that is, he's not dead.

[22 : 12] He's alive. He is risen from the dead. The text in different places tell us that their initial response to that was unbelief.

They didn't believe it. A couple of reasons. First of all, I wonder if there was an expression back in those days, 2,000 years ago, if you hear something that's too good to be true, it probably isn't true.

I wonder if they dealt with that back then. They probably didn't have the marketing schemes to contend with that we do today. He's alive.

He's alive. Nothing could turn around emotions more quickly than that. But you know, I can understand their reluctance to believe this.

Because first of all, it just does not comport reality. People do not come back from the dead. These people living then were well acquainted with dealing with the dead.

[23 : 29] Most of them had buried parents or grandparents or relatives or friends or neighbors. They were very familiar with death. They know what it looked like. And they know that there was one commonality about death and that is nobody returns.

It's strictly a one-way ticket. Nobody comes back. So it completely defied all conventional thinking. And why in the world would you allow yourself to believe that he was alive again only to find out later that it really wasn't true and he actually is dead after all?

What another letdown? A double whammy. Here you've already dealt with the reality of his death. Then you're told that he's alive and then you get your feelings and your confidence up again and elated with the joy only to learn that it was all wrong that he's still dead.

That would be terrible. And not only that but when I looked at this several years ago I thought why should that really be something that they would deny because they had seen Jesus bring back to life again the son of the widow of Nain.

They were carrying him to burial on this stretcher and Jesus touched the beer and the young man rose up and he gave him back to his mother and mother and son went away rejoicing and that young man was as dead as dead could be.

[25 : 19] And then there was Jairus' daughter. She too was dead and in the presence of her parents and Peter, James, and John Jesus raised Jairus' daughter back to life.

And then the ultimate Lazarus not only dead dead four days putrefaction of human flesh had set in and Martha warned him you don't want to roll away the stone the stench will be unbearable.

And when he said Lazarus come forth Lazarus came floating out of that tomb dead four days and he's alive again. So why would it have been so difficult for them to believe that Jesus was alive?

After all he had he had a history of bringing people back to life again. Yes but this was different. This was Jairus' daughter son of the widow of Nain Lazarus Jesus was alive and well able to exercise power and bring them back.

But he was alive when he did that. But when you're dead you don't have any power. You don't have any energy.

[26 : 57] Deadness can't produce life. It just can't. They knew that. And that's why they considered this so final. We are told in some of the texts that their words the women ran back to the apostles and told them we have seen the Lord he is alive the tomb is empty and all the text says is that their words seem to them as idle tales.

You know it is possible as a human being to want something so badly that you can taste it.

And you tend to try to create your own reality reality as if believing something hard enough and long enough will somehow mysteriously make it come to pass.

Let me tell you it doesn't work. You can't create your own reality because what is is whether you like it or not whether you believe it or not.

The mechanics of how this was to happen probably never entered into their mind and they still escape us really. I mean Jesus said I lay down my life of myself no man takes it from me.

[28 : 32] I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up again. As a corpse yes you realize we're talking about a different kind of corpse and you realize that the father was instrumental in this he was delivered by the father and he was raised by the father he was also raised by the power of the spirit and when he was raised he was raised with a glorified body so that Christ is the only one to this day who is in heaven with a body everybody else who is there is a disembodied spirit absent from the body present with the Lord no I don't know what that's like no I don't know what they're doing no I don't know how they appear to each other these are all questions that I've been asking myself now for a last session and we're not going to be able to look at

Luke but let's come to Mark chapter 16 Mark chapter 16 and verse 13 they went away and reported it to the others well let's look at verse 12 well let's look at verse 11 11 is so good we'll go back to 9 now after he had risen early on the first day of the week he first appeared to Mary Magdalene from whom he had cast out seven demons she went and reported to those who had been with him while they were mourning and weeping there's those bottomed out emotions just so wretched and when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her they refused to believe do you realize that the denial of the resurrection on the part of those who most wanted it to be true their denial of it is one of the greatest confirmations of the reality of the resurrection who were the first people to deny that

Jesus was alive it was the apostles and that remarkable I just love it that the spirit of God has built that into the story because it gives all kinds of credibility to the reality of it and after that he appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country and they went away and I take it that this is probably in reference to the disciples on the Emmaus road and they went away and reported it to the others but they did not believe them either and some wouldn't like Thomas until he was able to actually see experience the wounds of Christ for himself and when they saw him having prepared breakfast for them and was serving it there on the beach when they had been out fishing all night and they came in and

Jesus said have some breakfast boys and they ate broiled fish you gotta love it yes sir it sure is him grief grief the emotion of human grief mourning can produce all kinds of irregularities in our thinking abnormal thinking irrational thinking even some of you know what I'm talking about because you've experienced some very deep grief over loss of certain loved ones and you know that mentally and emotionally you just aren't yourself for a long long time here are these here are these two women they're just blubbering and crying and carrying on and trying to console one another and hug one another as they're on their way to this tomb to do this terribly unpleasant business last act they can provide for the

Lord that they loved and all at once one of them turns to the other and says oh wait a minute how are we going to get in there's this huge stone rolled in front of it and one of the texts in the gospel says that it was an extremely large stone what this was was a slab of limestone about 8 to 12 inches thick and 4 or 5 feet in diameter rolled in a trough that is cut into the ground so that the stone could be rolled up the hill in the trough in order to get into the tomb but it probably took more than two men to roll that stone up now here are these two little old ladies and they are going to prepare the body and all at once it occurs to them how are we going to get in well the angel of course took care of that but this is part of the irrationality of grief that is speaking and in

[34 : 27] John's gospel Mary is talking to Jesus and doesn't know that it's Jesus she thinks that it's the gardener the caretaker who is there working a little bit of overtime and she says to him sir when she sees that the body is gone she turns to Jesus thinking that it's the caretaker and says sir if you will just tell me where you have placed him I will take him away oh sure you will Mary you're just going to pick him up and throw him over your shoulder and walk off that that's part of the what does she mean she's going to take him she's not able to lift him to take him anywhere do you know how much dead weight weighs and a corpse at that but this is love and compassion talking in an unthinking irrational way which we're all capable of doing when grief sets in and grabs our hearts all of these emotions are eventually all of these negative emotions are going to be turned into that inexpressible joy because they are going to learn it really is true there he is and they walk with him and they talk with him and they see the wounds and he gives them their marching orders and they spend not a few hours but 40 days and 40 nights with him and then when it comes time to depart they are there and they witness him visibly ascend into heaven right before their eyes do you think that would not put an incredible backbone in the lives of those people they know what they know and no threats or denials or anything else is going to dissuade them from proclaiming this message that they now have he is risen and it is real and it is safe to believe it and you won't have to reverse yourself you won't hear news to the contrary it was all a big mistake you don't have to worry about that he's alive alive forever more and because he is it doesn't matter what comes into your life if you keep all of your future sorrows and losses hold them captive to this truth he is alive because he lives you too will live if your faith is in him whatever comes into your life you can face it with confidence because he lives

I want you to enjoy this song with me this is our closing benediction at the conclusion of the song you will be dismissed and I don't have my hearing aids in Keith and I want to hear this so crank it up and the joy And feel the pride and the joy that it gives But great hurts that call assurance

Oh, this child, this child, this child can face uncertain days Because He lives And because He lives, I can face tomorrow Because He lives Oh, fear is gone Because I know He holds the future

And life is worth living just because He lives And then one day we'll cross that river We'll find life's fire Oh, life's fire And death is we do it's a way We'll see the light of the world And we'll know He's way And the joy that it gives And death is we do it's a way

And death is we do it's a way And death is we do it's a way And death is we do it's a way And death is we do it's a way I know He holds the future God we admire Amen.