

THREE RESURRECTION REALITIES **(Hebrews 6:20-7:28)**

You may have heard about the Sunday School teacher who asked her 2nd grade class what Easter is all about. One student answered, “Easter is when all the family gets together, and we cook a big turkey, and we watch football on TV.”

The teacher replied, “No. That would be Thanksgiving.”

Another student spoke up. “I know what Easter is,” he said. “Easter is when you get this pine tree and cover it with decorations and exchange gifts and sing lot of songs.”

The teacher said, “No. That is Christmas.”

A third child ventured, “I know what Easter is. Easter is when Jesus was killed, put in a tomb, and left for three days!”

The teacher thought to herself, “He knows! He knows!” She pressed for a little more information. She asked, “Then what?”

The child continued. “Then everybody gathers at the tomb and waits to see if Jesus comes, and if He sees His shadow, He has to go back in for six weeks.”

If there is any confusion as to what Easter is, I want to clear that up. By the way, *Easter* is not a biblical word. You won’t find it in a Bible concordance since the word *Easter* appears nowhere in the Bible. It is also worth noting that the first announcement of Jesus’ resurrection came not from the lips of any man or woman. The first one to announce the resurrection was an angel, and whom did he tell? He didn’t tell any of Jesus’ immediate disciples—the Twelve. He didn’t tell any of the Temple officials. He didn’t tell Pilate, the one who had ordered His death. The angel told a couple of women. He said to them, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, as He said. Come see the place where He lay. Then go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead” (Matthew 28:5-7).

The angelic announcement of Jesus’ resurrection included two angelic commands: First, “Come and see” followed by “Go and tell.” Those two commands still apply to us today. We are to examine the evidence and allow ourselves to become convinced of the fact that Jesus is alive. Once we enter the company of the convinced, we are to tell others of what we have discovered so that they, too, can believe the joyous news. When you become truly convinced that Jesus is alive, that will change your life. It will also change what you talk about. Talking about last night’s ball game, or the weather, or the latest celebrity gossip, just won’t do anymore. You will have something more substantial to communicate.

Our great need is for our inattentive, distracted hearts to become as captured by the reality of Jesus’ resurrection as were the hearts of Jesus’ first followers. Once they knew that Jesus was really alive, He was able to send them on mission for Himself, and they were willing to go.

Jesus has sent us, too, but we are not going to go, and we are not going to speak unless we, like the disciples, become completely convinced that Jesus is alive. Our hearts must be arrested by the reality of His resurrection.

We have been studying the Letter of Hebrews on Sunday mornings. I had an inner

debate the first half of last week. I had trouble deciding whether to remain in Hebrews for today's message or to turn to passage that would lend itself to a more traditional Easter message that focuses plainly on the resurrection of Jesus.

I have opted to take you back to Hebrews, and honestly, I can only find one verse in the entirety of that letter that clearly, openly, and obviously mentions the resurrection of Jesus. It is found in the last chapter of the letter (13:20). While it is true that Hebrews doesn't clearly deal with the resurrection, it is also true that the reality of the resurrection is central to one of the most important teachings in the entire letter. That teaching is that Jesus is our Priest.

In this message, I want to show you how the reality of the resurrection undergirds and supports three truths concerning the priesthood of Jesus. We are going to look at 3 resurrection realities.

Reality #1: Because of His Resurrection, Jesus Is Our Forever Priest.

In the last verse of chapter 6, the author of Hebrews compares Jesus to an Old Testament individual known as Melchizedek. We will look at him shortly. Verse 20 of chapter 6 links Jesus with Melchizedek, and then chapter 7 shows us what Melchizedek was like.

Look at v. 3. In the English language, whenever you add the letter *a* as a prefix to a word, you negate the word. If you describe a person as being apolitical, you are saying, "He's not political." If a person is sick but is showing no symptoms of that sickness, he is asymptomatic. *A* means "not" or "without." This is what the author does in v. 3. He uses the word *father*, *mother*, and *genealogy*, but he uses the letter *a* at the beginning of each of those words. He is saying, "Melchizedek didn't have a father. He didn't have a mother. He had no genealogy that we can trace."

That is what the author wrote, but what did he mean by what he wrote? He doesn't literally mean that Melchizedek had no father or mother. He is saying the Scriptures do not record any father or mother. It doesn't tell us anything about his family of origin. It doesn't tell us when he was born or when he died. Those facts don't appear in the OT text.

Melchizedek shows up in just two verses of the OT. Those two verses are separated by about 1,000 years. He lived during the time of Abraham, roughly 2,000 BC. He is mentioned in Genesis 14:18. Then, one millennium later, King David inserts the name of Melchizedek in his 110th psalm. He tells us that God says of the anointed one, the Messiah, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

The truth of the matter is that there was no order of Melchizedekian priests. To have an order implies that there is a long succession of, and in this case—priests, but there was no priest who followed after Melchizedek. Aaron had an order. Aaron was the first priest during the time of Moses. He had sons who became priests as did their sons, and their sons, and their sons all the way to the time of Jesus and beyond.

As far as we know, Melchizedek had no sons. We are told nothing of His death. In that sense, he was a priest forever. The point is that Jesus would become literally what

Melchizedek was figuratively—a forever priest.

To be a priest forever, literally, you have to live forever, literally. That is where the resurrection comes in to play. Yes. Jesus died, but He was raised incorruptible. That means He will never die again.

There is a huge difference being raised and being resurrected. Jesus wasn't raised. He was resurrected. Jesus raised Lazarus and a couple of others during His ministry. Those whom Jesus raised eventually died again. To be more precise, those individuals were *resuscitated*. Through the application of modern emergency medical care, and intravenous drugs, it is quite common for someone to die clinically and then be brought back. Eventually, those same people are going to die again, and they won't be resuscitated.

Jesus wasn't resuscitated. He was resurrected. That is an entirely different category. He was given and a new and eternal body that will never face sickness or death. That is what He will give His followers when He returns. He will not resuscitate us. He will resurrect us. He will give us then what He has now—an eternal, physical body.

Because of His resurrection, Jesus is our eternal, forever Priest. The connection between the resurrection of Jesus and His enduring priesthood is seen better in 7:16. This indestructible life that Jesus has is a result of Him having been resurrected.

Verse 17 is a quotation of Psalm 110. That verse is quoted three times in Hebrews (5:6; 7:17, 21). Jesus' forever priesthood is further shown in 7:23-24. The benefit of having a priest forever is explained in v. 25.

All we have to do is draw near to Jesus, and He will do the rest. You don't have to clean yourself up first. You don't have to turn over a new leaf or do something meritorious to earn His favor. Just come to Him as you are, and He, over time, will make you into what and who He wants you to be.

One of the things that amazes me about Jesus is that I never find Jesus in a hurry. He never turns around to His disciples and complains, "Come on guys, pick up the pace. You're killing Me here. Let's get moving."

Jesus didn't rush them, and He doesn't rush you or me either. We, on the other hand, get impatient. We want to see progress. We want improvement, now!

I heard a wise man once say, "We overestimate what we can do in a short amount of time; we underestimate what we can in a long period of time." We need to take the long view. Jesus is our Priest, and He's not going anywhere. He ready to work with us; He's ready to work on us. He's not going to resign and take another job. We are encouraged to stay in contact with Him. We are to draw close. He will change us and mold us over a long length of time. As our Priest, Jesus prays for us, and His prayers are always answered.

It came along in 2007, and it solved a very real and very frustrating problem. Between 1980 and 2007 the postage rate on first-class stamps changed almost every year. And the price went up every time. It never went down. On January 1, 1980 the cost of a first-class stamp was 15 cents. By 2007, the cost of a first-class stamp was 39 cents. You remember having all these stamps that weren't worth enough to send a single envelope. You had to go to the post office to buy 1 and 2 cent stamps.

In a rare display of genius on the part of the U.S. Post Office, they came up with the Forever stamp. Regardless of when you bought the stamp or at what price, the Forever stamp is always worth the price of a first-class stamp. Today, the cost of a Forever stamp is 58 cents; it is projected to go up to 60 cents in July; so, get while the getting is good.

Jesus is our Forever Priest, or Forever Savior. The cost He paid for your salvation is always good. Your salvation is inflation-proof. You don't need Jesus plus something else. All you need, and all I need is Jesus and Jesus alone.

Let's look at a second Resurrection Reality.

Reality #2: Because of His Resurrection, Jesus Is Our Kingly Priest.

Melchizedek wasn't just a priest. We are told that he was also a King. Look at 7:1-2. The name Melchizedek means "King of Righteousness." Wouldn't you say that Jesus is the King of Righteousness? In the opening chapter of Paul's letter to the Church in Rome, we find the theme verse of Romans. Paul wrote:

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

And what is the gospel? Of course, the word *gospel* means good news, but what, specifically, is the good news? We find a good, succinct summary of the good news in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. In that passage, Paul wrote:

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received; that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

The gospel, the good news, is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. If you have no resurrection, you have no good news. The good news is that Jesus died and rose again so that He could take away our sin and give us His righteousness. The word *righteousness* mean *right standing with God*. Jesus is the only One who can give us a right standing with His Father. Jesus, the King of Righteousness, gives righteousness to those who receive Him by faith.

The name Melchizedek means *the King of righteousness*, but he was also a King in another sense. He ruled a place. He ruled a city. The name of the city was Salem. He likely ruled the city of Jerusalem long before it was called Jerusalem. King David took the city from the Jebusites and made it his capital, but 1,000-years before then, Melchizedek was the King of that city. It was called *Salem*, which means *peace*. That means Melchizedek was the King of Peace.

Likewise, Jesus is the King of Peace. Just as there is no real righteousness apart from the King of Righteousness, there is no real and lasting peace apart from the King of Peace. Here is something to remember: No Jesus, No Peace, but K-N-O-W Jesus, K-N-O-W peace. If you want to know peace, you must know Jesus.

On the night before Jesus was crucified, He told his fearful followers, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:27).

It was by His resurrection that Jesus became the King. Apart from the resurrection, Jesus was just another tragic, religious figure of ancient history. If it were not for His resurrection, Jesus was a false prophet because on numerous occasions He told His disciples that when they went to Jerusalem, He would be arrested, mistreated, and crucified, but He always told them He would be raised the third day.

Like Melchizedek, Jesus is a King/Priest.

History tells us that King Louis XIV was the longest reigning monarch in history. He sat upon the throne of France from May 14, 1643 until his death on September 1, 1715. He was the King of France for 72 years and 110 days.

Queen Elizabeth II is the longest current reigning monarch. At 95, she has been the Queen of England for over 70 years. That may seem like a long time, but it pales in comparison to the length of Jesus’ reign. Jesus will never be deposed. He will never retire or abdicate His throne. Kingship of the universe is not an elected position. Jesus was appointed King by His Father. It is a lifetime appointment, and since Jesus will never die, He will always be the King.

Because of His resurrection, we know that Jesus is our forever priest, and He is our Kingly priest.

Reality #3: Because of His Resurrection, Jesus Is Our Superior Priest.

The author of Hebrews uses *superior* in reference to Melchizedek. Look at 7:7. Melchizedek had an opportunity to meet Abraham. Next week we will look at that meeting and how it took place. When he met Abraham, Melchizedek blessed him. The author then notes that you can’t argue with the fact that the superior is the one who blesses the inferior.

Just as Melchizedek was superior to Abraham, Jesus our Priest is superior to all other would-be priests or would-be saviors. He is in a class all by Himself. The author paints for us a picture as to why Jesus is superior to all others. Look at 7:26-28.

If Jesus had not risen, He would have been like all the priests before Him. He would have served the best He could, but then upon His death, He would have been replaced. No, with His resurrection, Jesus was made perfect forever.

Through Hebrews, author is careful and insistent to show us that Jesus is better than. He argues that Jesus is better than the angels, better than Moses, better than Joshua, and better than Aaron.

He goes on to teach that the New Covenant Jesus has established has better promises, opens up a better sanctuary, is sealed by a better sacrifice, and achieves better results. Jesus is better. Jesus is superior.

I wonder, who are the would-be idols, the would-be gods, the would-be saviors in your life? In his book, *Counterfeit Gods*, Timothy Keller points out, “A counterfeit god is anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel

hardly worth living.” He also noted, “We think that idols are bad things, but that is almost never the case.” What happens is that we take a good thing and elevate it in our heart and mind as an ultimate thing. We look to that thing to give us meaning and purpose.

Keller also shows how the Bible describes the three ways that we respond to our idols. We love them. We trust them. We obey them.

What is a good thing in your life that you have elevated to an ultimate thing, and you are now tempted to love it, trust it, and obey it? For some it may be a relationship. It could be a spouse, a child, a grandchild. For some it could be your vocation. It could be your hobby. It could be a particular food or beverage. It could be success or recognition from others. Your idol is that thing that when someone stands between you and it, you get mad and upset. You get angry.

This Easter, I want you to know that Jesus is superior to all of those would-be gods that vie for your allegiance. Give them up. Let them go. Draw near to Jesus. Let Him show Himself to be your forever Priest, your kingly Priest, and your superior Priest.

I came across an article written by the Christian singer, Carolyn Arends. She wrote:

A couple years ago, during a jubilant Easter service, our pastor said something that stopped me in my mental tracks: “The world offers promises full of emptiness. But Easter offers emptiness full of promise.”

She mentioned such empty things as an empty cross, an empty grave, and empty grave clothes. Those empty things hold out great promise.

Instead of attempting to fill yourself with the empty promises the world offers, she offers a better way forward. She concluded her article with these words: “I’m going to believe that if I’ll just leave my empty spaces empty, He’ll fill them. That, I’m convinced, is a reasonable expectation.”

Some of you have come this morning, and you are feeling empty on the inside. That is not a bad thing. Ask God to fill you with His Spirit, His love, His light, and His life.

Some of you are here this morning who are full, but you are filled with the wrong thing. You are filled with anxiety, worry, stress, guilt, shame. Ask God to empty you. Let Him take out the garbage, and then, let Him fill you with hope, and purpose, and freedom. Draw near to Him by receiving the Resurrected Son.