

E A S T E R

Easter: The Resurrection

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Well, let me begin by just welcoming all of those of you who are guests who are here for the first time. For those of you who are joining us online, I want to say hello to my sister in Dallas, Texas. She and her family are watching us online today—hey, Becky. That’s kind of cool to be able to do that. Don’t you wish you had that, to be able to do that? Hey, for those of you who are watching on television, all of our Atlanta area churches, our strategic partner churches, those of you who are in your cars—we know we’ve several groups that invited their neighbors over to watch online. So for those of you who are eating, we’ll try not to think about that while we’re worshipping, so if you could just go ahead and get all that out of the way before we get started here. Anyway, we’re just thrilled that you’re here.

If this is your first time to be a part of one of our services for Easter, two things we want you to know. First of all, we think Easter is the best Sunday in the year to become a Christ follower, to become a Christian, and so at the end of the service we’re going to give you an opportunity to take a step in that direction. Many of you, you’ve been listening, you’ve been coming, you’ve been reading, your wife keeps giving you stuff to read, your husband keeps giving you stuff to read; your parents keep leaving little notes, and you’re finally to the point where you’re like you know what, I think I’m ready to take a step. So today we’re going to give you a chance to do that.

The second thing you need to know, if this is your first time to be with us on Easter, is that we’re a group of churches that believe that Jesus really did literally, physically, rise from the dead. It wasn’t just his spirit. It wasn’t an illusion. It wasn’t a group of people who just wanted to believe something so much they just believed they saw Jesus at a distance—you know they had Jesus sightings around Jerusalem. We believe he really died, he was buried, and he rose from the dead. But the thing that makes us a little bit different than maybe some of the churches that you grew up in or what you’ve heard before is we don’t believe he rose from the dead because the Bible tells us so.

Because the truth is the Bible doesn’t really tell us anything, because the Bible is a collection of ancient documents written by over forty people over the period of several hundred years. They were collected two or three hundred years after the final events that they record, and they were put together so that we, just for ease and comfort, are able to flip through and read the story. But the Bible is a collection of ancient documents. And the reason we believe Jesus rose from the dead is not because the Bible says so—we have a way better reason for that. And after you’ve worshipped with us now you will join the elite group of people who understand why you can actually believe Jesus rose from the dead.

Here’s why we believe he rose from the dead. We believe because Matthew, a first century tax collector who became a Jesus follower and saw him die and saw him after the resurrection, wrote about it. We believe because Mark, a Greek who hung around with the followers of Jesus and traveled with Peter, wrote about it and he believed it. We believe because