

"He Will Be Raised the Third Day"  
(Matthew 20:17-19)

Introduction: The psalmist wrote, "IF THE FOUNDATIONS ARE DESTROYED, WHAT CAN THE RIGHTEOUS DO?" (Ps. 11:3). The foundation is the most important part of any building. And it must be a strong one if the structure is to stand. If the foundation erodes, then all that is built upon it will collapse. The same is true of Christianity. It has a foundation, and that foundation is the saving work of Jesus Christ. All of our hope of forgiveness of sins and future blessedness rests upon Him. If Christ did not live a perfect life according to God's law, if He did not lay down His life for His sheep, if He did not rise from the dead, then we are forever lost, no matter what we might otherwise believe. Paul said, "IF CHRIST HAS NOT BEEN RAISED, YOUR FAITH IS WORTHLESS; YOU ARE STILL IN YOUR SINS. THEN THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP IN CHRIST HAVE PERISHED. IF WE HAVE HOPED IN CHRIST IN THIS LIFE ONLY, WE ARE OF ALL MEN MOST TO BE PITIED. (1 Cor. 15:17-20).

But to go further, if the message of Christ's substitutionary life, death and resurrection is removed from the Gospel, then you have again destroyed the foundation of Christianity. This is the good news of the Gospel. All of us have failed to live up to the perfect standard of God. All of us deserve to face God's wrath and fury for our sins. All of us have earned by our rebellion against the infinitely holy God endless punishment in hell. "ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD" (Rom. 3:23). These are the things which the Bible tells us in no uncertain terms. In our condition, we could never draw near to God. We may try and bring our wheelbarrows full of the refuse of our own "good works". We may try and enter into God's royal celebration clothed in our filthy rags. But God will not allow us to enter. We need a righteousness which is better than our own. We need a sacrifice which can take away the filthy rags of our sins. We need a champion who can defeat death, hell and the grave and deliver us into God's eternal kingdom. And God has provided the remedy for us in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is only when you recognize your fallen and wretched condition, when you see yourself as a sinner without any hope apart from the grace of God, that you will seek after God and His Christ to save you from your sins. A Gospel which leaves these elements out is no Gospel at all; it cannot save you. And so listen this morning as we hear again the wonderful story of Jesus, and what he has done to bring life out of the jaws of death, and to bring His people unto everlasting glory. What I want you to see in this text this morning is,

*Christ suffered, was crucified, died and was buried, and was raised again the third day to save His people from their sins.*

- I. *First, I Want You to See What Salvation Cost Christ in His Sufferings.*
  - A. *But In Order to Know What Salvation Cost Him, We Must First Know Who He Is.*
    1. *First the Bible says that He was the Son of Man.*
      - a. *Yes the Bible says that He was born as we were.*
      - b. *It tells us that He grew up as we did.*
      - c. *It tells us that He looked like an ordinary man, that there was no special beauty about Him, that we should desire Him.*
      - d. *It tells us that there were times when He grew hungry and tired, and needed to rest.*

- e. It even tells us that when they crucified Him, that He died as other mere mortals would when subjected to that kind of pain and suffering.
2. But the Bible also tells us that He was more than merely a man. He was God the Son in human flesh.
    - a. This was no mere man that walked the earth.
    - b. And He was not merely a great teacher, or philosopher, or king.
    - c. But He is the eternal Son of God, who became a man.
      - (i) He is the One who has existed from all eternity. The author to the Hebrews wrote, "JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME YESTERDAY AND TODAY, YES AND FOREVER" (13:8).
      - (ii) He is the One who created all things that exist. The apostle John wrote, "ALL THINGS CAME INTO BEING BY HIM, AND APART FROM HIM NOTHING CAME INTO BEING THAT HAS COME INTO BEING" (John 1:3).
      - (iii) He is the One, who the Bible tells us, is revealed in the creation. Paul wrote, "FOR SINCE THE CREATION OF THE WORLD HIS INVISIBLE ATTRIBUTES, HIS ETERNAL POWER, AND DIVINE NATURE HAVE BEEN CLEARLY SEEN, BEING UNDERSTOOD THROUGH WHAT HAS BEEN MADE, SO THAT THEY ARE WITHOUT EXCUSE" (Rom. 1:20).
      - (iv) He is the One whom the angels praise and worship in heaven. John wrote, "AND I LOOKED, AND I HEARD THE VOICE OF MANY ANGELS AROUND THE THRONE AND THE LIVING CREATURES AND THE ELDERS; AND THE NUMBER OF THEM WAS MYRIADS OF MYRIADS, AND THOUSANDS OF THOUSANDS, SAYING WITH A LOUD VOICE, 'WORTHY IS THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN TO RECEIVE POWER AND RICHES AND WISDOM AND MIGHT AND HONOR AND GLORY AND BLESSING" (Rev. 5:11-12).
      - (v) This is the One whom the Father sent forth into the world. "BUT WHEN THE FULLNESS OF THE TIME CAME, GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON, BORN OF A WOMAN, BORN UNDER THE LAW" (Gal. 4:4).
      - (vi) He was born of the virgin Mary, that His parentage might be seen to be divine and not human. Also that He might escape the sin that all men are liable to through their father Adam. Isaiah the prophet wrote, "'BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD, AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,' WHICH TRANSLATED MEANS, 'GOD WITH US'" (Matt. 1:23).
      - (vii) This is the One who took upon Himself our nature that He might be our representative before God.
      - (viii) This was His great humiliation, that the eternally blessed God would stoop so low as to take upon Himself the nature of one of His creatures. Paul wrote, that "ALTHOUGH HE EXISTED IN THE FORM OF GOD," He "DID NOT REGARD EQUALITY WITH GOD A THING TO BE GRASPED, BUT EMPTIED HIMSELF, TAKING THE FORM OF A BOND-SERVANT, AND BEING MADE IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN" (Phil. 2:6-7).
- B. But This Was Not the Depth of His Humiliation.
1. Paul goes on to say, "AND BEING FOUND IN APPEARANCE AS A MAN, HE HUMBLING HIMSELF BY BECOMING OBEDIENT TO THE POINT OF DEATH, EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS" (Phil. 2:8).
  2. It is this humbling that Christ is speaking of in our text this

morning. It is that passion that He was about to undergo on the cross to deliver His people from their sins.

- a. First, Jesus tells us that He was going to be handed over to the chief priests and scribes. This found its fulfillment in His betrayal by one of the twelve disciples who were the closest men to Him. Matthew tells us that when He was in the garden, "AND WHILE HE WAS STILL SPEAKING, BEHOLD, JUDAS, ONE OF THE TWELVE, CAME UP, ACCOMPANIED BY A GREAT MULTITUDE WITH SWORDS AND CLUBS, FROM THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND ELDERS OF THE PEOPLE. NOW HE WHO WAS BETRAYING HIM GAVE THEM A SIGN, SAYING, 'WHOMEVER I SHALL KISS, HE IS THE ONE; SEIZE HIM.' AND IMMEDIATELY HE WENT UP TO JESUS AND SAID, 'HAIL, RABBI!' AND KISSED HIM. AND JESUS SAID TO HIM, 'FRIEND, DO WHAT YOU HAVE COME FOR.' THEN THEY CAME AND LAID HANDS ON JESUS AND SEIZED HIM" (26:47-50).
- b. And once Jesus was betrayed to them, He said that they would condemn Him to death. Matthew continued, "NOW THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND THE WHOLE COUNCIL KEPT TRYING TO OBTAIN FALSE TESTIMONIES AGAINST JESUS, IN ORDER THAT THEY MIGHT PUT HIM TO DEATH; AND THEY DID NOT FIND ANY, EVEN THOUGH MANY FALSE WITNESSES CAME FORWARD. BUT LATER ON TWO CAME FORWARD, AND SAID, "THIS MAN STATED, "I AM ABLE TO DESTROY THE TEMPLE OF GOD AND TO REBUILD IT IN THREE DAYS."" AND THE HIGH PRIEST STOOD UP AND SAID TO HIM, 'DO YOU MAKE NO ANSWER? WHAT IS IT THAT THESE MEN ARE TESTIFYING AGAINST YOU?' BUT JESUS KEPT SILENT. AND THE HIGH PRIEST SAID TO HIM, 'I ADJURE YOU BY THE LIVING GOD, THAT YOU TELL US WHETHER YOU ARE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD.' JESUS SAID TO HIM, 'YOU HAVE SAID IT YOURSELF; NEVERTHELESS I TELL YOU, HEREAFTER YOU SHALL SEE THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, AND COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.' THEN THE HIGH PRIEST TORE HIS ROBES, SAYING, 'HE HAS BLASPHEMED! WHAT FURTHER NEED DO WE HAVE OF WITNESSES? BEHOLD, YOU HAVE NOW HEARD THE BLASPHEMY; WHAT DO YOU THINK?' THEY ANSWERED AND SAID, 'HE IS DESERVING OF DEATH!'" (Matt. 26:59-66).
- c. But Jesus also said, that they would not put Him to death, but that they would deliver Him to the Gentiles.
  - (i) They were not permitted by the Romans to put a man to death.
  - (ii) And so they brought Him to Pilate and asked that He be crucified. Pilate did not want to do as they asked, but out of fear he delivered Jesus over to be scourged, and mocked, and then to be crucified.
- d. But the most painful aspect of His humiliation was not the physical pain of the scourging, nor of the blows to His face.
  - (i) It was not the driving of the nails through His hands and feet, it was not the thirst, nor even the painful agony of His hanging from those nail-wounded limbs for many hours.
  - (ii) Rather, it was the agony of becoming sin for His people, of His bearing the wrath of God for that sin, of His suffering hell in being separated from God because He bore those sins. He cried out on the cross, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?" (27:46).
  - (iii) So terrifying was this experience that the mere

anticipation of it caused Christ to sweat great drops of blood in the garden during the very cold evening before His passion.

- e. Christ suffered on that *cross*. He suffered what His people should have suffered. He took fully the wrath of God upon Himself, and fully satisfied the justice of God for them.
  - (i) And then Jesus, to indicate that His work was complete, cried out, "IT IS FINISHED!" (John 19:30). "FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT. AND HAVING SAID THIS, HE BREATHED HIS LAST" (Luke 23:46).
  - (ii) Then they took Him down off the *cross*, and buried Him in the tomb.

II. But This Is Not Where the Story Ends. Jesus Did Not Remain in the Tomb. Rather, He Fulfilled His Prophecy that on the Third Day, He Would Be Raised from the Dead.

A. The Wonderful Message of Christianity Is that Christ Did Not Remain in the Tomb.

1. Yes, He did die. He did not merely pass out for a while. He did not revive in the tomb, push away the heavy stone, fight His way past the guards and make His escape, after having been flogged, beaten, crucified, and then laid in the tomb without food and water for three days.
2. Rather He rose from the dead, as He said He would, on the third day. Again, Matthew tells us, "NOW AFTER THE SABBATH, AS IT BEGAN TO DAWN TOWARD THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, MARY MAGDELINE AND THE OTHER MARY CAME TO LOOK AT THE GRAVE. AND BEHOLD, A SEVERE EARTHQUAKE HAD OCCURRED, FOR AN 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 GARMENTS AS WHITE AS SNOW; AND THE GUARDS SHOOK FOR FEAR OF HIM, AND BECAME LIKE DEAD MEN. AND THE ANGEL ANSWERED AND SAID TO THE WOMEN, 'DO NOT BE AFRAID; FOR I KNOW THAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR JESUS WHO HAS BEEN CRUCIFIED. HE IS NOT HERE, FOR HE HAS RISEN, JUST AS HE SAID. COME, SEE THE PLACE WHERE HE WAS LYING. AND GO QUICKLY AND TELL HIS DISCIPLES THAT HE HAS RISEN FROM THE DEAD; AND BEHOLD, HE IS GOING BEFORE YOU INTO GALILEE, THERE YOU WILL SEE HIM; BEHOLD, I HAVE TOLD YOU" (28:1-7).
3. Jesus is no longer in the tomb, but He is risen from the dead. This is the foundation of the Christian faith. It is the substitutionary life, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ which underlies the whole teaching of Christianity. Christ's resurrection is His vindication that He is who He said He was and that He has done what He said He would do. He has conquered death.

B. And the Wonderful News, the Good News of the Gospel, Is That Because Christ Has Risen from the Dead, All Who Trust in Him Alone to Be Saved Will Also Be Raised.

1. Jesus did not do these things for Himself, but as the representative of His people.
  - a. He did not need to leave heaven for Himself. He is the eternally blessed God. But He became a man, He took upon Himself the nature of a creature to save His people.
  - b. His perfect life was vicarious; it was substitutionary; it

was on behalf of His people. It was to provide them with a perfect righteousness, a garment of the purest white holiness.

- c. His atoning death and agony on the cross was substitutionary. It was to provide His people with a just basis for God to forgive them. It was to wash away the stain of their sins.
  - d. And His victory over the grave was substitutionary. It was to bring to His people life from the dead. It was to raise them from the death of their sins to newness of life.
2. And the Bible tells us that the word of Christ was perfect and complete. He actually saved those who draw near to God through Him.
- a. There is nothing that needs to be done to complete His work of redemption. On the cross He said, "IT IS FINISHED."
  - b. There is nothing that you or I can add to it. How can you improve on perfection? Can a child who doesn't paint well even with water colors, hope to lay his brush upon the Monalisa to improve it? Can a man who is completely deaf and who has never studied music hope to write a symphony greater than that of Beethoven? If these things which are less than perfect can't be improved upon by those who are imperfect, how can the perfect be improved by that which is infinitely lower?
  - c. Christ has done it all. But all that Christ has done to perfect salvation will do you no good if on the great day of God's judgment, you are found outside of Him. Outside of Him, you are still clothed in the filthy rags of your own sin. You are still under God's displeasure and wrath. You must come to the Savior. You must trust in Him alone to save you. You must turn from all of your dead works, and all of your own fruitless efforts, and trust in His righteousness alone. You must be willing to give up everything, even your own life, if you are to follow Him.
  - d. Are you trusting in Christ this morning? Has He risen for you to deliver you from death? Does He now sit at the right hand of God as your Lord? Do you show that He is your Lord by daily submitting to His will? Do you love Him more than any thing else in this whole world? Do you especially love Him for who and what He is, holy and undefiled and separate from sinners?
  - e. If so, then you have been united with Him by faith. He has fulfilled the law, taken God's wrath, and been raised for you. And if you have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, you certainly will be united with Him in the likeness of His resurrection.
  - f. But if you have not yet come to the Savior this morning, if you have not yet turned from your sins and yourself, from your own pride and your way of doing things, and embraced the Savior by faith, then come to Him now; trust in Him now to save you from the coming wrath of God. There is no more glorious experience on earth than to know that your sins have been removed through the shed blood of Jesus and that you have escaped the just sentence of hell.

- g. The apostle John wrote, "FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVES ON HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE" (John 3:16).
- h. Don't turn away from His offer of life to you this morning. Call upon the Lord. Ask Him to change your heart. For to those who love Him, there is escape from hell and judgment and the most wonderful prospect of an eternal inheritance of love and joy forever with God in heaven. Don't perish apart from the Savior. "BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND YOU SHALL BE SAVED" (Acts 16:31). Amen.