



SERMON BASED STUDY GUIDE

Pastor Charlie Riley

EASTER

OPENING & PRAYER:

Easter centers on the concrete claim that Jesus rose from the dead, defeated death, hell, and the grave, and secured victory for those who trust in him. First Corinthians 15 functions as the theological hinge: if the resurrection did not occur, preaching and faith lose their foundation; because it did, everything changes. History outside the Bible supports the claim—Jewish historian Josephus and Roman writers such as Pliny and Tacitus record Jesus' life, crucifixion under Pilate, and the persistence of a movement that worshiped Christ as God. These independent attestations sit alongside an unprecedented manuscript tradition: thousands of early copies with remarkable consistency demonstrate that the Bible's core claims circulated quickly and widely.

"Lord, thank you for sending Jesus to die for our sins. As we study out the historical facts behind the miracle You sent to us, please use us to further Your Kingdom here on earth.

SCRIPTURE:

Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up-if in fact the dead do not rise. **1 Corinthians 15:12-15**

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. **1 Corinthians 15:20-21**

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

Jesus' Resurrection Was Verified

Mary Magdalene – **John 10:10-18**

Other Women - **Matthew 28:8-10**

Peter - **Luke 24:34, 1 Corinthians 15:5**

Disciples On The Road To Emmaus-**Luke 24:13-32**

The Apostles - **John 20:19-29, Luke 24:36-49**

Seven Disciples - **John 21:1-14**

Over 500 Brothers and Sisters - **1 Corinthians 15:6**

James - **1 Corinthians 15:7**

Paul - **Acts 9:1-6, 1 Corinthians 15:8**

GO DEEPER:

Archaeology and science increasingly align with biblical statements, and examples like the Walls of Jericho excavation and Leviticus' statement about blood illustrate that historical and scientific inquiry often corroborates ancient texts rather than disproves them. Crucifixion and death of Jesus appear historically indisputable; eyewitness testimony multiplied rapidly after the resurrection. Acts 2 emphasizes that within fifty days opponents could have produced a single credible rebuttal if the claims were false, yet the public testimony persisted and grew into a movement willing to face persecution and death.

The testimony of former skeptics and investigators — from a criminal reporter who studied the evidence to scientists and philosophers who reexamined design and law — shows that honest doubt can lead to conviction when pursued rigorously. The theological implications follow a clear pattern: Christ's death stands as substitution for sinners, his burial symbolizes the burial of past guilt, and his resurrection inaugurates a new, living relationship with God. John 3 frames the human response: the light has come, and those who reject it often prefer darkness because their deeds resist exposure. The offer of forgiveness and new life remains available; faith aligns a person with the historical reality of resurrection and its present power to transform identity, behavior, and destiny.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1. The resurrection is a historical fact. The resurrection functions as the decisive historical event that validates the Christian claim: if Jesus rose, then death's finality collapses and hope gains a concrete anchor. Historical and textual evidence converges to show that the resurrection was proclaimed by eyewitnesses and resisted by contemporaries who could have easily refuted it. Faith built on this event becomes a reasoned trust, not mere wishful thinking. **[01:21]**

2. Nonbiblical historical attestations matter. Independent sources like Josephus, Pliny, and Tacitus provide external confirmation that a man named Jesus lived, was crucified, and inspired a persistent movement. These attestations remove the convenient excuse that the Christian claim exists only within isolated or biased texts. When outside records corroborate internal claims, the moral and intellectual case for belief deepens. **[07:33]**

3. Eyewitness cost confirms conviction. The transformation and martyrdom of early witnesses signal that adherents did not die for a known lie; people will die for perceived truth but rarely for falsehoods knowingly embraced. Acts and early testimony record hundreds of witnesses and a movement that faced persecution rather than recant. This willingness to suffer strengthens the claim that something profoundly real occurred. **[31:56]**

4. Doubt can lead to faith. Several notable investigators and intellectuals began skeptical but changed course after rigorous inquiry into historical, legal, and scientific evidence. Honest doubt functions as a pathway to deeper understanding when pursued with intellectual integrity and moral openness. Following questions faithfully often opens the way to an encounter with the risen Christ. **[33:28]**

LEARNING AND GROWING:

1. The death of Jesus was a substitution for sinners, his burial symbolizes the burial of past guilt, and his resurrection inaugurates a new life. **[37:37]** Which of these three aspects—forgiveness for sin, freedom from guilt, or power for new life—do you find yourself needing to embrace more fully today?
2. The resurrection is presented not as a myth but as a historical fact that is the foundation for faith. How does knowing your faith is built on verifiable history, and not just wishful thinking, change the way you face doubts or explain your hope to others?
3. The sermon states that people will die for what they believe to be true, but not for what they know to be a lie. **[26:22]** How does the willingness of the early disciples to face persecution and death serve as a powerful testament to the truth of the resurrection?
4. People often avoid coming to the light because they fear their deeds will be exposed. **[40:27]** Is there an area of your life you are still trying to keep in the darkness, afraid to bring it into the light of God's grace and forgiveness? What would it look like to trust that Jesus has already taken care of it on the cross?
5. The sermon concludes that the reason people don't come to Christ is not due to a lack of evidence, but because they love their darkness. **[40:27]** How can we compassionately engage with people who are resistant to the gospel, ensuring we are presenting the truth of Christ while also understanding the spiritual battle happening over their hearts?

CLOSING PRAYER:

“Lord, thank you for sending Jesus to die for our sins. Please help us to lead others to a relationship with You. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.”