Easter Sunday

Why the resurrection had to be physical — and what God intends to do with ours

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, April 20, 2025
PASSAGES	Matthew 28:1-10; 1 Corinthians 15:39-49; 2 Timothy 1:9-10; Romans 8:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3-4; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Peter 5:8-10; 2 Corinthians 3:14-18
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:09:45 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

We know the resurrection is the center of the Christian message, but we do not always know why it had to be a *body*. Jesus did not take a ghost throne and preside over the dead; the women at the tomb took hold of his feet. And because our resurrection is derivative of his, that physical, incorruptible life is the means by which God brings his people into his own glory.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The angel could have comforted the women by saying Jesus was alive somewhere in the spirit. He said something harder and better: he has risen, go see the empty slab.
- When Paul preached, the thing that set rooms on fire was never “there is a God” or “you go to heaven.” It was the resurrection of the dead. Greeks and Romans already believed the soul survives; a body coming back was the offense.
- In the Christian message death is not a friend who releases you. It is an enemy — the last one to be defeated.
- God did not save us because he was short of help. He has no need of butlers, and he has far more capable creatures available. The resurrection is an act of his own purpose and grace.
- Scripture says, repeatedly and in several hands, that God calls his people into his glory. As Matt put it, “If that weren’t in the Bible, I don’t think you’d believe it.”

- Dying and going to heaven forever is not the Christian hope. Cut the return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come, and large parts of the message go missing with them.
- Jesus' risen body is incorruptible, and that is the trait that transfers. United with him in a death like his, we are united with him in a resurrection like his.

▶ 1:09:45

Easter morning at Hope began with an explosion. A house in northwest Austin had gone up during the week, and the blast zone held a strange concentration of Hope Chapel families — the Johnstons immediately to the left of it, the McCarrons two doors to the right, the Frys across the street. Matt had the room stand and intercede for them, and then he said the quiet thing out loud: he did not know what that week would have been like for those families without a church family, but he imagined it would have been harder. James warns us not to send people off with a blessing and no help, and God does not ask of us what he does not do himself. "One of the things God does is give us to each other."

Why a resurrection at all?

▶ 1:13:16

Then the actual question, which Matt asked almost mischievously: what should he preach on today? We know the resurrection is core. You can feel it in a primal way. But why did Jesus have to do it that way? "Why didn't he just sit down on his ghost throne and preside over the ghosts?" Plenty of people today assume that is what happens — the spirit goes to heaven and heaven is the forever home. If that is the whole story, then the return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the new heavens and the new earth, the life of the world to come are all loose pieces with nowhere to go.

▶ 1:15:09

He reached back to the middle of the second century, to Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*, and read a sentence with sharp edges on it: if you meet people called Christians who deny the resurrection of the dead and say that souls at death are simply taken up to heaven, "do not imagine that they are Christian." Matt's point was about where that idea came from. Justin knew. It came in from Plato and the Greeks, imported as the faith spread among philosophers who wanted to keep their anthropology and add Jesus to it.

What set people off in Acts

▶ 1:16:59

If you want evidence, Matt said, read Acts and watch for the trigger. In front of the Sanhedrin, at the Areopagus, before Felix — track the exact moment the room turns. It is not the existence of God. It is not the afterlife. It is the resurrection of the dead, which is also the charge Paul says he is really on trial for (Acts 24:21). For a Greek, the body was the problem and death was the release — which is why, in Plato's telling, Socrates drinks the poison in good spirits. Death is a friend. Ask the same question of the Christian message and you get the opposite answer: death is the last enemy to be destroyed.

A body you could take hold of

▶ 1:18:05

So he read the account itself — the earthquake, the angel rolling the stone back and sitting on it, the guards going down like dead men:

> "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 ↗

It is not every day an angel with the brightness of lightning speaks to you, and he could have said something consoling and vague — Jesus died in this realm, but he is alive in the spirit somewhere. That might even have helped. It is not what he said.

▶ 1:19:49

> "And behold, Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings.' And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.'"
>
> MATTHEW 28:9–10 ↗

Matt stayed on the detail. This is not a hologram and it is not an apparition. They took hold of his feet. And he did not wave off their worship; he told them not to be afraid. Something larger than an accepted payment is happening here — an event that reshapes the known universe and conquers death outright.

God has no need of butlers

▶ 1:20:30

> "...who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."
>
> 2 TIMOTHY 1:9–10 ↗

Immortality brought to light would also have sounded strange to a Greek, who assumed he already had it. But notice the stated reason: *his own purpose and grace*. Not our usefulness. "God has no need of butlers, chauffeurs, doormen, waiters," Matt said — and if he did, he has creatures faster and smarter than we are, with more eyes. He is not served by human hands as though he needed anything. And yet he rewards us anyway, down to a cup of water given because you belong to Christ — a reward for services he never required.

▶ 1:23:57

Hold the *why* for a second, he said, and just admit that we want it. We want to stand before our maker and hear "well done." We long for dignity, value, adventure, honor, belonging, glory. And then he punctured the small version of that longing: "Pickleball's great and all, but food and drink is not what's going to be so exciting about the new heavens and the new earth." Sitting down with an Egyptian over grapes to ask how they built the pyramids would be fun. The trouble is that he can imagine it, and no heart of man has imagined what God has prepared. We should think bigger.

Called to his own eternal glory

▶ 1:25:21

He read Peter on the adversary prowling like a roaring lion, and then stopped on what comes next:

> "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."
>
> 1 PETER 5:10 ↗

"If that weren't in the Bible, I don't think you'd believe it," Matt said — and then headed off the suspicion before anyone could raise it. This is the ESV. Nothing funky. He checked the Greek himself,

and there are Bibles in the pew beside you if you want to take it home and verify it. Nor is this a self-affirming discovery that we were the divine light all along. It is downstream of the cross, where we are washed clean and set free, and it is an intimacy that, understood properly, would make us tremble.

▶ 1:27:24

And Peter was not out on his own:

> "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."
>
> ROMANS 8:16–17 ↗

Children, not in a cutesy, in-name-only way. Heirs — of riches and graces, yes, but the text says heirs *of God himself*.

"My glory I give to no other"

▶ 1:28:13

Matt put the tension on the table rather than around it:
"I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other." His answer was careful. The glory God shares with redeemed humanity may be a different glory. Christ holds divine glory from before the world began (John 17:5) and also receives glory in his exaltation, which he hands on:
"The glory that you have given me I have given to them." All of it true at once. "And it's not just Peter and it's not just Paul."

▶ 1:30:11

He went to Paul on the veil that lies over the reading of the old covenant until a person turns to the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:14–16) — may that veil be removed all the more — and then to what the unveiled face is for:

> "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."
>
> 2 CORINTHIANS 3:17–18 ↗

"So if you don't like it, take it up with him. This comes from him."

Conformed first, then glorified

▶ 1:31:23

Back in Romans 8:28–30, the chain runs foreknew, predestined, called, justified — and lands on *glorified*. There it is again. Which means God's purpose was never to raise an army because he was short of recruits. At the heart of it is an intimacy beyond our capacity to imagine: being joined into the body of Jesus, what we also call the bride. And by the Spirit's power it will be natural to us rather than forced — which is exactly how Paul describes
putting off the old self and putting on the new, created after the likeness of God.

▶ 1:33:15

> "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire."
>
> 2 PETER 1:3–4 ↗

"Verse three is audacious. It's scandalous," Matt said. "Well, I guess I thought verse three was audacious. Verse four is nuts." And then the reason he thinks the body matters: "I think you'll need that to be able to understand and digest and receive the full blast of love he prepares to throw at you."

Not a ghostly paradise

▶ 1:34:42

Justin, he reminded us, is called Martyr because the word means witness — it came to be attached to those killed for the faith, and he was decapitated. What that witness taught, from the era of primitive Christianity, was something other than the theology of the Greeks of his day: you die, good riddance to your body, your soul is released back to God. "Our hope is that the resurrection power that brought Jesus back to life would do the same to us in a real physical supernatural way. Our hope is not a ghostly paradise right after we die." Matt could tell the room was already forming the objection, so he raised it himself — what about all the people who died on the operating table and saw the light at the end of the tunnel? The Bible describes very little of the interval: asleep in the Lord, with Christ, and he is sure it is great, because you are with Christ. But that is not where the hope is placed.

▶ 1:35:50

He put the Nicene Creed beside it — basically, he said, bumpers to defend against reading the Bible wrong. The section on the Son: he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. The last section, on the Spirit: "We look for the resurrection of the dead in the life of the world to come." Which leaves two questions, and he asked both. "Why does he have to come back? Why is he going to do that if we're all just going to go home there that way?" And how is a raised body connected to our salvation at all? Because it is through the gospel that he brings life and immortality to light.

▶ 1:36:30

> "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."
>
> ROMANS 6:3–5 ↗

▶ 1:36:59

Newness of life is not a metaphor for a new manner of living, or for turning a new chapter in your life. Paul means this. "Why is it such a rally cry for Christians that he is risen?" Matt asked — and answered it by elimination. Jesus had brought people back to life in their old bodies before. True. "But this we've never seen before." Was an incorruptible body what Lazarus got? "No. He died again. Most people die once. Some people die twice." Jesus' risen body, the one Paul calls a spiritual body, is "divine and powerful beyond comprehension" — it ate fish, it could be touched, it could pass through a wall, and it cannot be corrupted.

▶ 1:37:46

And incorruptibility is the trait that conveys. "It's that trait of his resurrected body that conveys to us the same, because if we've been united with him in his death, we'll be united with him in a resurrection like his. And it is then that we are risen, incorruptible, immortal, glorious, truly his children." Then, before anyone could file it under wishful thinking: "I know that's scandalous, but it's not a stretch. And I'm not making this up." So, back to Paul.

Sown perishable, raised imperishable

▶ 1:38:21

Paul grants that flesh differs from flesh — one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, another for fish — and that heavenly bodies differ from earthly ones, sun from moon, star from star in glory. "You're like, okay, so what?" Verse 42 is the so-what:

> "So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 15:42–44 ↗

Imperishable, he glossed — "meaning can't die." And spiritual body does not mean an apparition of something, or a hologram. Remember: they touched his feet, he ate fish, he could walk through walls, "but he was still a physical body as well."

▶ 1:39:37

Then the two Adams, which is where the pattern gets its shape: the first man Adam became a living being, the last Adam a life-giving spirit — and the order runs natural first, then spiritual, not the other way round. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. Adam died with no access to the tree of life. "I don't know if you noticed this, but you were also born outside the garden." We don't expect anything different, so none of this life's decay should surprise us. But just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven — "meaning, like Jesus's resurrection body, we will be risen unkillably alive in power and glory."

▶ 1:40:20

Which is why the ache is evidence rather than noise. "Do you feel the dishonor and weakness of this life? The shame, the pain, and the frustration, the vanity of it. You feel there's more because there is more" — something scandalous and beyond description. But there is more.

The primitive message, and its primitive practices

▶ 1:41:12

The charge at the end was to re-embrace the oldest version of this — to agree with Justin that our hope is Christ's return, and that either we will be alive when he returns or asleep in Christ awaiting the resurrection of the dead, at which point we see the life of the world to come. And with the primitive message, its primitive practices: devotion to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers — "and by the way, this sermon on glory is straight from the apostles."

▶ 1:41:49

Then he named them one at a time. Place an importance on being baptized — be baptized; there are classes coming up, so reach out. Read the scriptures for yourself: "Don't take my word for it. See that the Spirit-breathed word of God declares this with no shame whatsoever." It is not hidden in one corner of one letter, maybe up to interpretation. It is the plain claim that no heart has even imagined what God has in store for those who love him. And devote yourself to the fellowship — the fellowship of the saints.

▶ 1:42:21

Break bread with them, too. Hope does it ceremonially once a month, and also as an actual meal "tons of times," the way the ancient Christians did. "And if you play your cards right, you could probably join a small group that does it every week."

▶ 1:42:56

And devote yourself to prayer, remembering that prayer is a two-way street of communication. Speak to God. "Just be careful. He talks back." Last, embrace this primitive message of the glory of the resurrection and the life of the world to come. Why can we be this confident that death has been overcome? "Because our resurrection is derivative of his very own. And until then we have hope. Jesus Christ is our hope of glory. He is risen."

▶ 1:43:39

Then he prayed it onto the room rather than leaving it as an argument — that the Holy Spirit would come upon us in great power "just to help us believe the gospel," and that "a fullness of hope and faith and joy would be shaken down, running over and overflowing within us." The prayer team was up front with name tags, having spent the morning praying in anticipation of praying with whoever came; if they were busy, pray with somebody nearby, "that'll probably work out." Otherwise, go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- James 2:15–16
- Acts 17:32
- Acts 24:21
- 1 Corinthians 15:26
- Matthew 28:1–4
- Matthew 28:5–7
- Matthew 28:9–10
- 2 Timothy 1:9–10
- Acts 17:25
- Mark 9:39–41
- 1 Corinthians 2:9
- 1 Peter 5:8–9
- 1 Peter 5:10
- Romans 8:16–17
- Isaiah 42:8
- John 17:5
- John 17:22
- 2 Corinthians 3:14–16
- 2 Corinthians 3:17–18
- Romans 8:28–30
- Ephesians 4:22–24
- 2 Peter 1:3–4
- Romans 6:3–5
- 1 Corinthians 15:39–41
- 1 Corinthians 15:42–44
- 1 Corinthians 15:45–49
- Acts 2:42

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Before this morning, how would you have finished the sentence “when a Christian dies, they…”? What did Justin Martyr’s warning do to that answer?
2. Paul’s hearers erupted over the resurrection of the dead, not over God or the afterlife. Why do you think that one claim is still the hardest to say out loud?
3. Matt said God has no need of butlers or waiters. If usefulness is not why he saved you, what is — and how does that change the way you serve?
4. Scripture says God has called you to his own glory and excellence. Where does that land for you: scandalous, comforting, or hard to believe?
5. Acts 2:42 names four practices — teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, prayer. Which one are you actually taking up this week, and with whom?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel’s senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church’s governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope’s own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2XCDi6dwoPQ&t=4185s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.