

## Easter 2017

### THE I AM'S OF JESUS

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2017

Jesus lived on earth for about 33 years around 2000 years ago. No one has lived here like Him! The things He did then often surprised people. The words He spoke were often surprising to those who heard them. His actions and His words still surprise people today as they examine them. His influence is still felt immensely around the world.

If daily newspapers had been around in Israel 2000 years ago, Jesus would have regularly been in them! The headlines might have read like:

Water into wine!

Jesus feeds 5000 men!

My daughter was healed!

“You must be born again!”

Today we celebrate Easter. The Easter story is about a God who loves us, and who goes to extraordinary lengths to be in relationship with us.

#### What happened to Jesus?

- ✦ Matthew 26-28
- ✦ Mark 14-16
- ✦ Luke 22-24
- ✦ John 18-20

We know Judas betrayed him late on Thursday, that He stood before a Jewish court and then was taken to Pontius Pilate (the Roman Prefect of Judea 26-36AD). Jesus was then whipped and led out to be crucified on the Friday. Some of his friends and his mum watched this. They saw the big ugly nails going into his flesh. He was on the cross for hours and then He died. His body was brought down and put into a tomb.

His followers and family would have been heart-broken. They knew Jesus was the Messiah. The Person they expected to change society. He was going to make the country better again, but now the Romans had killed Him. They weren't expecting that.

On the Sunday some women went to the tomb to anoint Him with herbs. They saw something surprising when they got there. Something they weren't expecting at all. Jesus wasn't in the tomb! There had been a resurrection! Jesus had been raised from the dead! Over several weeks Jesus appeared to His disciples to prove that He was alive and then He ascended into heaven. Jesus' disciples' minds must have been blown apart by all of this. They thought they knew what God was planning, but God did something much bigger and on a much grander and unbelievable scale! Lots of passages in the OT prove this. Jesus dying on the cross wasn't an accident. It had been planned by God.

A short while before He died, Jesus was in a place very near Jerusalem called Bethany (it's in the West Bank now). It's just the other side of the Mount of Olives. Some good friends of His lived there: three siblings – Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Lazarus was ill so his sisters sent for Jesus knowing from experience that He could heal him. Jesus didn't go to him straight away, but stayed where He was for 2 days. By the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been dead for several days already. All the mourners that had gathered knew that Lazarus was dead.

#### What happened to Lazarus?

Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be an offensive odour, for he has been *dead* four days! [It is hopeless!]" *Amp.*

Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. *KJV* [John 11:39]

Jesus went to the tomb where Lazarus had been placed and simply said "Lazarus, come out." Lazarus came out just as Jesus had commanded! Just like when Jesus said "Come" to Peter when He was on the water and Peter was in the boat.

Jesus called Lazarus....

Jesus called Lazarus....

by name! (v43)

On His way to the tomb, Jesus was met by Martha and in part of that conversation, He said:

Jesus said:

**“I am the Resurrection  
and the Life.  
The one who believes  
in me will live,  
even though they die.”**

(John 11:25)

Jesus knew that He was going to bring Lazarus back from the dead in just a few minutes. He also knew that in a short while He Himself would be in Jerusalem. He was going to be crucified there in order to take the punishment for all of mankind's sin. Jesus knew how hard and terrible this was going to be. He also knew that He Himself was going to rise from the dead. He was going to overcome death and sin. No one can have eternal life unless we say to Jesus, “Be my Saviour today, I need You. Help me to follow You with every bit of my life and character.”

Resurrection is 2 Greek words: *ana* (up, again) and *histemi* (to stand). So, Resurrection is literally “to stand up” or “to stand again.” A Resurrection is a return to life, a new starting point. Jesus is saying that He is the author of that new starting point and that new life. God is the creator of all life, from a small cell to humans, from a new born lamb to the stars and the universe. Jesus didn't say that He could resurrect people. He could do that, but He was also saying He is Resurrection. He wasn't just saying that He gives life to people; He was stating that He is Life.

Why are we all here today? Why is there water in the baptistry? What's going to be happening in the next 20 minutes?

Davit, like many of us, has been hearing God speak to her over the past few months. We'll hear from her shortly, but you'll already know that she has always been a pretty good person – she's never killed anyone, been a bank robber or a prostitute. She knew she had to repent and turn away from what she has been doing. She wants to show everyone that her new life in Christ has begun. By being baptised she is publically saying that she trusts God for her past, present and future. Following Jesus means a new life, a new hope and a new start.

Every human will live forever. We don't just become ash or manure when we die. We go to heaven or hell. Our life and actions make us get ready for hell and eternal remorse and punishment. We are not good enough to go to heaven by our own endeavours. As we hear about Jesus and thank Him for dying for us and then make Him Lord of our own lives so we can be assured of a different life now and an eternal wonderful life in the future. God leaves us to choose.

There are three main ways to be baptised. Sprinkling, pouring and total immersion. Here, like many churches, we totally immerse. It is a picture or symbol of drowning and dying to our old life. As Davit goes into the water she is dying, whilst under the water (for a couple of seconds!) she is buried and then rising out of the water she is

being resurrected. Baptism doesn't *make* you a Christian. It *shows* you are a Christian. She is following Jesus' example and command.

"The voice that spans the years,  
Speaking life, stirring hope,  
Bringing peace to us,  
Will sound till He appears,  
For He lives,  
Christ is risen from the dead." (See what a morning)

Jesus still says:  
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Jesus calls us all to follow Him. He called Lazarus by name. "Lazarus, come out!" He is calling us all by name today. He is calling us *now*. We are to be obedient to what He commands. Today Davit is obeying God by being baptised. What are you being called to do? Forgive someone who was horrible to you 15 months ago? Offer to pray for your friend who is upset at the moment? To be gentler in the way you speak to people? To read a chapter of the Bible every day? To commit to pray everyday for a family member or a work colleague so that he/she may become a Christian? God is calling us all to follow Him.

Jesus still says:  
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and the Life."**  
(John 11:25)  
How will *you* respond?  
**"....Do you believe this?"**

John 11:25, 26 – Jesus doesn't make a statement about Himself – He asks Martha a question straight away. Jesus is still asking everyone that same question: "Do you believe?"

As we celebrate Jesus being raised from the dead and Davit obeying God by being baptised. Let's have a super and brilliant celebration. We can use words and music to do this. How excellent if we use our own actions too!