

# “BEYOND A NEW DAY”

1 PETER 1:3-5

APRIL 12, 2009– SUNDAY 11:00 AM –DR. JACK GRAHAM

[applause] Ahhh... that’s the fourth time I’ve heard that I’m about ready to run right now! Okay? Just run somewhere! [laughter] How would you like to be 22 years old, good looking like that and can sing like that? [applause] Thank you, \_\_\_\_\_[not sure of name/s?!]! Oooh, and choir.

When our Texas Rangers star slugger Josh Hamilton comes to the plate in Arlington Stadium, the Ball Park in Arlington “He Saved the Day” is played. Every player chooses their song. And Josh has chosen “He Saved the Day” because of the life transforming experience that he knows in Christ.

Monday was a great day because I was out at the Ball Park in Arlington. It is opening day. I picked up my **USA Today** newspaper and an advertisement said: “Today is a day beyond the day!” Opening day in major league baseball! There is no opening in sport quite like opening day in baseball. We had a great day out in Arlington on Monday. A big win, former president George W. Bush threw a perfect strike in the ceremonial first pitch and it was good to welcome him back to Texas [applause begins] and back to Dallas in this good way. I don’t know but I think he had about fifty thousand Republicans out there at the ah... at the stadium. [laughter] There was a great amount of cheering going on and then the team...

And you know the thing about baseball... hope springs eternal ah... in the mind of a baseball fan. This is the year... I mean this is the year we win the pennant and go to the World Series and win it all. [applause] That’s what we think! And that’s why it’s so exciting on opening day... the opener!

But I thought of another opener that was greater than all the openers in history. It was the day God opened the grave of the Lord Jesus Christ and He came out alive [extended applause] forevermore! He’s saved the day! And therefore,... and therefore this is a day beyond every other day. And it is a day beyond today.

In most Easter messages that you hear it is likely a bit about the past and certainly the past is essential for Ea... Easter. What happened two thousand years ago is... is vital... necessary to why we celebrate today. Had Jesus not come out of that tomb ah... two thousand years ago we would not be here today celebrating that resurrection, and therefore, we’re here to affirm that the resurrection is a historical fact and a force in history. He has changed our lives; He has changed the world! And the evidence is compelling that Jesus is alive!

But with that clearly stated, Easter is not only about the past, what happened then, but as the angel said [Matthew 28:6], “*He is not here; He is risen!*” And today I want to talk to you about the relevance of the resurrection in your life... the relevance of the resurrection today. Because [Psalm 118:24] “*This is the day the Lord has made and we rejoice and are glad in it.*”

You know it’s been said that Christians... believers live between two days: this day... “*This is the day the Lord has made...*”, and That Day... when we see Christ. The Apostle Paul said, [2 Timothy 1:12], “*I know whom I believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that Day.*” So this day and that Day... that Day when we are in His risen presence forever. Because the resurrection means that because He lives, we live also! Jesus said [John 11:25], “*I am the resurrection and the life: he that believes in Me, though he be dead, yet shall he live!*”

If you go to a cemetery and look at the tombstones, there, of course, is the name of the person deceased and buried and there is a birth date and a death date. You can do nothing about your birth date. That was not your choice. You can do very little, if anything about your death date. But engraved in every tomb, on every stone in a cemetery is a little dash. That dash represents your life, and you have quite a bit to say about what goes in the dash and making your life matter.

And to know the living Christ is to make life matter. It is to live with unbridled optimism and... and containable joy because of the risen Christ in us. Paul spoke of the power of this resurrection. And the message of the Christian faith is that Christ died and rose again, and now He lives in us! [Colossians 1:27] “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*” and that He has promised eternal life now and forever to all who believe! And so how we live our lives, therefore, is highly influenced and ah... ah... and impacted by our perspective on eternity.

That’s why the Bible says [Colossians 3:2], “*Don’t set your affection on things below, but set your affection on things above.*” Don’t walk around with your head down, your shoulders slumping, but rather get your eyes into the sky, and remember that eternity is now because of what Christ has done. And we live with this eternal perspective in life that makes life matter, that gives life meaning. We look and therefore we lay up treasures not on earth that evaporate, but Jesus said [Matthew 6:20], “*Lay up treasures in heaven.*”

In the first chapter of the book of 1 Peter... and I invite you to take your Bibles and turn to 1 Peter chapter 1... Peter gives... He is an eyewitness of the resurrection and he gives an exaltation... a hymn of praise to the risen Christ. And in verses 3 to 5 the first verses, really, of his hymn of praise, he says this:

*3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4) to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ...5) who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

Every day is a miracle; every day is a promise; every day is a gift from God, and you must be present to receive it! And so because every day is a gift from God, we are to live with this eternal perspective and... and eternal gratitude in the resurrection! How are we to do that? How do we live beyond the day?

I don’t know what your Easter is like. Maybe your Easter is all sunshine and daffodils and beautiful dresses. You’re here with family and friends. Everything is going well in your life. It’s a good life; it’s a good day. You’re happy. It truly is a happy Easter.

But others have walked into this room and Easter is more like this stormy day... this cloudy, rainy day that we’re experiencing. Your house has been foreclosed; you lost your job; the doctor diagnosed an illness; someone broke your heart; your child is sick; you’re hurting. Maybe you’re on the edge emotionally. Maybe you are on the verge of losing faith and hope. Maybe your Easter is more like that today.

But the message of Christ... this Good News that we share means that every day is His day! That He is the Ancient of Days which means that He rules and reigns over all of our days, both good and, yes, bad. Days in which the sun is shining and it’s bright and it’s beautiful, and days that are dark and stormy and cloudy. He saved the day! And beyond this day we can live a life of expectancy. That’s what hope is. Hope is the sure and confident expectation that our future is in His hands. He said, “We are born again into this living hope.” Jesus said, “The experience of salvation is so life-changing... it is so radical that it’s like being born all over again.” He said this to a very religious man, a Rabbi, who wanted to know how he could go to heaven... how he could know God. And He gave hope and promise.

Interesting that that is found in the third chapter of John... the story of Jesus and Nicodemus, and Jesus said [John 3:3], “*You must be born again.*” This was, again, a very religious, a very sophisticated, very righteous man. In the very next chapter, John chapter 4 Jesus meets a woman at the well... not a man but a woman. And she was a hated Samaritan woman. She was a very sinful woman. Her life was broken and shattered in pieces. But the same Savior in love and grace extended a new life to this very sinful woman.

So interesting isn't it, side by side in the Scripture. It's demonstrated that no person is too good that they don't need Jesus, and no person is too bad that Jesus doesn't love them and embrace them, if that person will come to Him. To be born again means to... that your life is made brand new, that you have a new direction, a new dynamic for living. Are you alive in Christ? And if so, do people know it?

Now I was stunned this week when ah... I read an article that was ah... reported in a British newspaper. You can't make this stuff up... what you're about to hear. It says: “Bosses of a publishing firm are trying to work out why no one noticed that one of their employees had been sitting dead at his desk days before anyone asked if he was feeling okay. [congregation reaction] George Turtlebaum, 51, who had been employed as a proofreader at a New York firm for thirty years had a heart attack in the open-plan office he shared with 23 other workers. He quietly passed away on Monday, but nobody noticed until Saturday morning when an office cleaner asked why he was still working during the weekend.”

Now you've got to ask yourself a couple of questions on a story like that: number one [pastor chuckles]: Is this true? I mean maybe at Dunder Mifflin but I don't know if this can happen anywhere else; you know what I'm saying? And... and... and it... it... is this really true? Could... could... And then you've got to ask yourself... I mean it's in the newspaper so you gotta believe it, right? [laughter] But really what you have to ask yourself is could this happen to... (ha) to me!

Do people know you're alive? Oh, not just physically but do people know you're alive in Christ in your office? In your own home and family? In your neighborhood, at your school? Do people know you're alive? Are you breathing spiritually? Have you been born again, because if you are, people will know it! You will know it and others will know it! But what Christ... How can the living Christ, the Savior of the world, come into your life and you not know it and nobody else know it?

Now we have been born unto and into a living hope in Christ. So we live on tiptoe with expectation and joy everyday. What gets you up in the morning? Is it... is it just your alarm clock or is it... is it the call of the day? The opportunity to live a life for Christ and to make a difference in this world for your family and your friends?

And so no matter how you walked into this room today... if you are broken and hurting or if you're having a great day and a great life, your life when given over to the Lord Jesus Christ can be transformed and He is working all things together for our good and you can stand triumphant in Christ because He is alive! That's living expectantly! Not living with your best years behind you, disappointments and failures! But I'm telling you that life can begin again for you everyday in Jesus Christ. Easter is for everyone and for every day. So live expectantly; He's alive!

But not only live expectantly but live confidently... Confident that not only do you belong to Him, but that He is preparing a place in heaven for you. And this is why Peter says that we've been born again into this living hope through the resurrection to an inheritance that is imperishable and undefiled and unfaded, and kept in heaven for you in the grip of God, kept by the power of God! So we live with a certain confidence... assurance as believers in Christ we know that our sins have been forgiven! We know that Christ lives in our lives! We know that we have a future in heaven with Him because He has promised this and He is keeping what we have committed to Him! He is guarding it. And therefore you are on your way to heaven as a child of God!

Now it seems like a lot of people talk about heaven, but nobody really wants to go there. Over the next several weeks we’re going to be talking about heaven and what it’s like. I figure if we’re going to be going there we ought to know what heaven is like. In our Bible teaching we’re going to be studying a... ah... a book... a Bible study called “One Month to Live” in anticipation. If you knew you had one month to live and thirty days only to make a difference for Christ and to love your family and... and... and to live your life... if you only had thirty days, how would you live your life? So we’re going to be talking about that over the next several weeks, but I pray that you would live your life confidently, knowing that we are in the omnipotent grip of God. The nail-scarred hand of the Lord Jesus Christ has us!

You know there’s a difference... that’s the difference in... in a relationship with Christ and mere religion. Because here’s what religion says: Religion says if you’re a good boy... a good girl... if you obey God and do the right things... if you show up at church enough and listen to the sermon and stay awake... if you do enough good deeds, then... then God will love you and God will accept you and God will give you a place in heaven. You’ll go to heaven because you’ve done these things. You... you obey God and God will reward you by giving you eternal life. That’s religion!

The difference is in a relationship with Christ, He loves you unconditionally, totally and eternally! He said [Jeremiah 31:3], *“I’ve loved you with an everlasting love!”* He loved us in our sin and in our brokenness. And let’s face it, we’re all broken people... we’re all dysfunctional in some way or another and sin has damaged us. And sin creates death and emptiness in lives and brokenness that we can’t even describe. We’re all broken and damaged by sin. But God loves us anyway. And while there is nothing we can do to gain His acceptance, because of what He has done in dying on the cross, rising on the third day, He loves us unconditionally. Let me illustrate that:

Suppose ah... our little four and half grandson Ian... if I said to him or his parents said to him, or you said to your children, “Okay, if you’re a good boy and if you do all the right things and you obey me perfectly, and if you promise never to disobey and you don’t disobey, then I will give you my love.” Now what kind of parent or grandparent would say something like that? I... I... you know... no human parent would say something like that to a child! So why in the world would we think God would say something like that to us?! “If you’re good... if you obey My law... if you promise to do better and better and better, then maybe I will love you!” NO! We love our children unconditionally because they are our own blood, they are our own flesh, they are our own family! And I assure you that God’s love is greater by eternity... by infinity than any human love! And so God loves you.

I was praying this week... all week about what I should say in this message and... and what the heart... and what I want you to walk away with today, and it just seemed that the Spirit of God kept prompting me, saying, “Tell them I love them! Tell the people that Jesus loves them again and again! Tell them that I love them!” So I’m telling you today that He loves you. And you don’t need a religion. It’s not a matter of you trying to hold on and hang on to hope and to God. No, He’s got you right here in His grip!

That’s why we sing “No power of hell, no scheme of man will ever pluck me from His hand!” This is what Jesus said [John 10:29], *“You’re in My Father’s hand and no one will pluck you from the Father’s hand.”* Heaven is guaranteed. You won the lottery; you didn’t even buy a ticket! [laughter] Your name [tap] is written [tap] in the only [tap] book [tap] that [tap] matters... the Lambs Book of Life! And so you live in this security, this certainty, this confidence because of what He has done. And it’s all because of Him.

And there’s one final word. To live this day beyond the day, to live like a life beyond the day. We’re to live therefore, eternally. Now eternal life happens... We receive eternal life the moment we receive Christ. Jesus said, “To know Me is eternal life.” And here in 1 Peter chapter 1 we’re told that this salvation is guarded for a faith ready to be revealed in the last time. So salvation... eternal life is past tense... it means that all of our sins

have been forgiven... past, present and future; and it's present tense... it means that Christ comes to live in us... By the power of His Spirit Jesus is living in us, the Risen Christ in you, [Colossians 1:27] "*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*" And salvation is not only past and present, it is future! We are being saved and we will be saved when we stand in Christ alone complete and experience heaven... eternal life. In a place where there's no more tears, suffering, sorrow, grief. Dear friends, we are just a few days away from a painless, tearless, graveless, deathless life in the presence of our Savior forever. This is the ultimate hope of Easter!

And people die every day and you know many people think the only thing you need to do to go to heaven is to die. Is that right? Is that all you need to do to go to heaven is to die? Three people die every second worldwide. Eleven... or pardon me, 180 per minute... step into eternity, 11,000 nearly every hour, 260,000 die daily and are in eternity in the next 24 hours.

A young pitcher for the Anaheim Angels pitched brilliantly, seven innings shut-out ball and then went to dinner with friends and at an intersection, I believe, Tuesday or Wednesday evening, a drunken driver ran into their car, killing three of them, including this young man... 22 years of age, a brilliant baseball career in front of him, snuffed [snaps fingers] out on earth just like that, leaving a grieving family and teammates and friends.

And when something like that happens, it... it reminds us how fragile life is and how brutal life can be. And how anyone can live without a certainty and a hope of knowing that when you die, you're going to heaven is beyond me. How could you possibly not settle this issue in your life? Because God has given us a choice. He said [Deuteronomy 30:19], "*I have set before you life and death, therefore, choose life that you may live.*" Jesus with arms outstretched says, "Come unto Me. Come to me and live forever, live eter... eternally."

I'm looking forward to being with Christ when He comes either in His soon return... promised return or when He comes for me in death. The Apostle Paul said [Philippians 1:21], "*To live is Christ and to die is gain.*" That's the ultimate win-win situation. The resurrection should take away your fear of death because someday you may read in the newspaper that Jack Graham has died. But don't you believe a word of it because I will be more alive than ever in the presence of my risen Savior! And any and every believer can say the same thing!

And this is why the Bible says, [Amos 4:12] "Prepare to meet your God." Heaven is a place prepared for people who are prepared. And the way you get ready... the way you prepare for eternity is by giving your heart and your life to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the consequences are severe. To reject His love, to turn away from His grace, to walk out over the blood of Christ... redemption for you is to walk away from God forever and ever and spend eternity in a place called hell. And just as surely as heaven exists, yes, hell is real. So choose life by choosing Jesus Christ and trusting Him as your Savior and your Lord. And live for Him in the power of His Spirit.

One thing you need to do to get ready before you die, so you can go to heaven. Yes, there's something more that you have to do than just die to go to heaven, and that is to personally receive Jesus into your life by repenting of your sin. That means to turn away from your sin and to put your trust in Christ and Christ alone. Not in yourself. Isn't it about time we stop living for our self? Life isn't about us; it's about Him and living for Him. This is a life beyond today, a life forever.

Would you bow your heads with me in prayer? Every head bowed and every eye closed.

If you would receive Jesus into your life today, pray this prayer. The Bible says, "*Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.*" Jesus said, "*I stand at the door and knock and if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in.*" So God is opening the door of your heart right now as you trust in Him. And just pray a simple prayer of faith like this:

*Lord Jesus, I believe. I believe You died on the cross for me. I believe You rose again. And right now I repent of my sin, turn from myself and my brokenness and I trust in You. Lord Jesus, come into my life. (Just call upon His name.) Come into my life and make me Your child now and forevermore. Give eternal life so that I will live with You forever in the place called Heaven.*

And if you are praying that prayer, thank Him for hearing your heart and bringing you to Himself. If you sincerely mean it, Jesus said, “If you confess Me before men, I will confess you before the Father in heaven.” I’m going to invite you to come forward on this Easter morning. Upstairs and downstairs where our ministers are stationed. We have men upstairs in the balcony where several thousand people are seated. Also on the lower level, we’re right here. Don’t be ashamed. Don’t allow the crowd or the Easter trappings or any of the rest of the stuff that’s going on around you to keep you from coming to Jesus today... today! Come to faith in Christ and we’ll help you.

You say, “Well, I’ve got a lot of questions.” Come with your questions. We’ll take an open Bible and the best we can answer your questions from the Scripture, and you can walk out of here with a brand new life.

There are others, you’re a believer but you want to be baptized... ah... demonstrating your faith in the resurrection. Baptism you know, the Bible way is a picture of the death, the burial and the resurrection of Christ. It’s the Easter expression. So why don’t you come today and say, “I’m a believer and I want to schedule my baptism and publicly confess my faith in Christ.

Others want to come to Prestonwood and be a member here. This is a church you can call home. And you need a spiritual home. Make that decision today to unite with us, with you yourself, your family, your friends and let’s make a difference in this community and beyond for the glory of God.

*Thank You, Lord, for the opportunity now to invite men and women and boys and girls to you [music begins]. I count that an amazing privilege. And so, God, may Your Holy Spirit take the words that we have spoken and the meditations of our hearts today and convict of sin and convert the soul and change lives, O God, for Your glory. This is for You and You only. Lord, all of this is for You. And we stand for You and we praise You because of your great grace and love in our lives. Because You really are our Lord and our living Savior. In Jesus’ name. Amen*