

West Suffolk Baptist Church

Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant



Volume 13 Issue 4

West Suffolk Epistle



April 2026

Message from the Editor



This month marks the twelfth anniversary of this publication. It has been an honor to serve as editor-in-chief throughout this period. What started as a dedicated project has evolved into an ongoing journey of learning. The articles published over the years have contributed greatly to a deeper understanding of Reformed Theology, presenting both challenges and opportunities due to its diverse perspectives. For each issue, contributions have been solicited from individuals committed to the Reformed Faith and recognized for their expertise and academic rigor in doctrinal matters. Feedback and suggestions for improving the publication are always welcome. Please feel free to contact Walt Lawrence by phone at (619-3268) or by email at (gwlcf10415@gmail.com).

Daniel's Vision of the Son of Man

The vision recorded in the seventh chapter of Daniel is central to the book, and understanding it is crucial to grasping the meaning of a number of otherwise obscure passages in the New Testament.

Daniel received this vision in the first year of Belshazzar (Daniel 7:1), so it occurred sometime after the events of chapter 4 but before the events of chapter 5. In the vision, Daniel sees the winds of heaven stirring up the sea (Daniel 7:2). From the sea, he witnesses four great beasts arise, each different from the other (Daniel 7:3). The first beast is like a lion with eagles' wings (Daniel 7:4). Its wings are removed and it is made to stand on two feet like a man. The second beast is like a bear (Daniel 7:5). It is raised up on one side and has three ribs in its mouth. The third beast is like a leopard (Daniel 7:6), but it has four wings and four heads. The fourth beast is almost indescribable (Daniel 7:7). It is terrifying and strong. It devours with its iron teeth and crushes what is left with its feet. It also has ten horns. As Daniel considers the horns, he sees a little horn arise among the ten (Daniel 7:8). The little horn has the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking great things.

In the remainder of the vision, Daniel witnesses a scene of divine judgment at the very throne of God. As he looks on, the Ancient of Days takes his seat on his throne (Daniel 7:9). As tens of thousands stand before God, the books are opened and the court sits in judgment (Daniel 7:10). As the little horn is speaking, the fourth beast is killed and its body given over to be burned with fire (Daniel 7:11). The dominion of the remaining beasts is taken away, but their lives are spared for a time (Daniel 7:12). Daniel then sees "one like a son of man" coming with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:13). The one like a son of man is presented before the Ancient of Days and to him is given "dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him" (Daniel 7:14a).

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His is “an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:14b). In the remainder of the chapter, an angelic being interprets Daniel’s vision giving particular attention to the fourth beast (Daniel 7:15–28).

The parallels between the vision of chapter 7 and the dream in chapter 2 are obvious. In both cases, a symbolic image is used to reveal a succession of four earthly kingdoms, which are judged and followed by an everlasting kingdom established by God. There is much debate over the identity of the four kingdoms. The traditional view is represented by John Calvin, who identifies the four beasts as the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman Empires respectively. Calvin identifies the “little horn” of verse 8 with the line of the Caesars, while admitting that this interpretation of the little horn is not universally held. According to Calvin, then, the establishment of God’s kingdom occurred at the first advent of Christ. The conservative twentieth-century Old Testament scholar E.J. Young agrees with Calvin on the identity of the four kingdoms, but he identifies the “little horn” as the antichrist, whose power is to be manifested at the end of the present age. A variation of the Roman view is the dispensationalist interpretation. According to this view, the fourth beast, or Roman Empire is to be revived in some form at the end of the present age. According to the dispensationalist interpretation, the coming of the one like a son of man to receive the everlasting kingdom will occur at Christ’s Second Advent.

Not all conservative scholars have adopted the Roman view of the four kingdoms. Both Robert Gurney and John Walton, for example, have proposed that the four beasts should be identified as the Babylonian, Median, Persian, and Greek Empires. Gurney argues that most conservatives have rejected the Greek view because the coming of Christ occurred during the period of the Roman Empire (see Daniel 2:44). He observes, however, that the Roman Empire did not end for many centuries after Christ’s first advent. In support of his own position, he notes that Christ was born around 6 BC, “very soon after the final obliteration of the Greek empire in 27 BC, when Egypt was made a Roman province.” Others who argue for the Greek view point out the similarity between the “little horn” on the fourth beast (Daniel 7:8) and the “little horn” on the goat in Daniel 8:9. The “little horn” of chapter 8 is universally identified as the Greek Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes. If the two “little horns” are identical, it adds weight to the argument that the fourth beast is to be associated with the Greek empire.

The two interpretations of the four beasts, then, are:

- 1- The traditional Roman view, which identifies the four beasts as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.
- 2- The Greek view, which identifies the four beasts as Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece.

Each has its own strengths and weaknesses.

A strength of the Greek view is the similarity between the “little horns” of chapters 7 and 8. A strength of the Roman view is the use in chapter 8 of a single symbolic animal to represent the Medo-Persian Empire (see Daniel 8:3–4, 20).

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A weakness of the Greek view is a lack of explanation for Daniel's failure to say anything here about the Empire that was to be in power at the first advent of Christ. A weakness of the Roman view is the continuation of the Roman Empire for centuries following the first advent of Christ. While not without its difficulties, the Roman view is strongest.

The coming of one like a son of man to the Ancient of Days (vv. 13–14) is the climactic section of this vision, and it is of crucial importance. Much confusion has been caused by the assumption that this text is a prophecy of the Second Coming of Christ. The context precludes such an interpretation. As this section of the vision begins, Daniel sees the Ancient of Days take his seat upon his throne (v. 9). The Ancient of Days is God, and the scene is set in his heavenly throne room. While Daniel himself experiences this vision on earth from his bed (cf. 7:1), the vision itself is a vision of the heavenly throne room. After God is seated at his throne, the court sits in judgment and the books are opened (v. 10). The fourth beast is then judged and destroyed, while the remaining beasts are given a temporary reprieve (vv. 11–12). This sets the stage for Daniel's vision of the one like a son of man.

In verse 13, Daniel witnesses "one like a son of man" come with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days to be presented before him. The Aramaic phrase *bar 'enash*, literally translated "son of man," is a Semitism that simply means "human being." What Daniel sees, then, is one "like a human being," as opposed to another beast "like a bear" or "like a leopard." This one like a son of man comes to the Ancient of Days and is presented before him (v. 13). The "coming" that is seen in this vision, then, is not a coming of God or a coming of the one like a son of man from heaven to earth. It is a coming of one like a son of man to God who himself is seated in heaven on his throne. The direction of the "coming" is not from heaven but towards heaven. It is for this reason that this vision is not a prophecy of the Second Coming of Jesus from heaven to earth. Rather, as Calvin long ago explained, it is better understood as a prophecy of Christ's ascension to the right hand of God after his resurrection (cf. Acts 1:9–11; 2:33; 5:31).

The one like a son of man is presented before the Ancient of Days for the purpose of his investiture. When he is presented before the Ancient of Days he is given a dominion and a kingdom that all should serve him (v. 14a). There seems to be an allusion here to the event described in Genesis 1:26, when the first man was given dominion over all the creatures (cf. Psalm 8:4–8). The establishment of the kingdom will restore God's creational purposes. This kingdom given to one like a son of man is to be everlasting (v. 14b). As in the vision of Daniel 2, we see here a depiction of four human kingdoms followed by the establishment of God's eternal kingdom. ~ **Dr. Keith A. Mathison - Professor of Systematic Theology at Reformation Bible College in Sanford, Fla.**

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The Danger of Calling the Church To Repent

Have you ever heard of a church that repented? Not individuals, but an entire church that collectively recognized its congregational transgressions and openly, genuinely repented, with biblical sorrow and brokenness. Sadly, you probably have not!

For that matter, have you ever heard of a pastor who called his church to repent and threatened his congregation with divine judgment if they failed to do so?

It's not likely. Pastors today seem to have a hard enough time calling individuals to repent, let alone calling the whole church to account for their corporate sins. In fact, if a pastor were so bold as to lead his own church to repent, he might not be the pastor for much longer. At minimum, he would face resistance and scorn from within the congregation. That inevitable backlash is likely strong enough to generate a kind of preemptive fear, keeping most church leaders from ever considering a call for corporate repentance.

On the other hand, if a pastor or church leader has the temerity to call for another church—rather than his own—to repent, he will almost certainly be accused of being critical, divisive, and overstepping his authority. He'll face a chorus of voices telling him to mind his own business. Vilifying him, therefore, clears a path for the confronted church to sidestep his admonition altogether.

The fact is, churches rarely repent. Churches that start down a path of worldliness, disobedience, and apostasy typically move even further from orthodoxy over time. They almost never recover their original soundness. Rarely are they broken over their collective sins against the Lord. Rarely do they turn aside from corruption, immorality, and false doctrine. Rarely do they cry out from the depths of their hearts for forgiveness, cleansing, and restoration. Most never even consider it, because they have become comfortable with their condition.

In reality, calling the church to repent and reform can be very dangerous. Church history is replete with examples.

The Great Ejection

The name "Puritan" was devised as a term of derision and scorn. It was applied to a group of Anglican pastors in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who sought to purify the church of its remaining Roman Catholic influences and practices. These Puritan pastors repeatedly called for the churches of England to repent of their extensive carnality, heresy, and priestly corruption. But the Anglican Church would not repent. They could not deny the need for reformation, but they wanted a "middle way" rather than a thorough reformation.

Those who held the reins in the Anglican hierarchy remained impenitent—but not passive. They were determined to silence the voices calling them to repentance. For decades, the Puritans faced hostility and persecution from church leaders and political rulers alike. Many suffered and died for their faith, while many more endured imprisonment and torture for the sake of Christ. The persecution reached a crescendo in 1662, when the English Parliament issued the Act of Uniformity.

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The decree essentially outlawed anything other than strict Anglican doctrine and practice. That led to a monumental and tragic day in England's spiritual history: August 24, 1662, commonly known as the Great Ejection. On that day, two thousand Puritan pastors were stripped of their ordination and permanently thrown out of their Anglican churches.

Those faithful Puritans understood that the Church of England had to repent and reform before the nation would ever turn to Christ. But rather than reject their wickedness and corruption, the impenitent leaders of the Church of England attempted to silence anyone calling for repentance and restoration.

Subsequent history reveals that the Great Ejection was no isolated event with temporary significance. The spiritual turmoil did not end once the Puritans were excommunicated and separated from their congregations. In fact, it's safe to say that the Great Ejection was a spiritual disaster that serves as a clear and dark dividing line in England's history, and which has implications to the present day.

One of those ejected ministers was Matthew Meade. Concerning the Great Ejection, he wrote, "This fatal day deserves to be written in black letters in England's calendar." Iain Murray describes the spiritual fallout of that dark day:

After the silencing of the 2,000, we enter an age of rationalism, of coldness in the pulpit and indifference in the pew, an age in which scepticism and worldliness went far to reducing national religion to a mere parody of New Testament Christianity.

J. B. Marsden saw the event as an invitation for the Lord's judgment. He wrote,

If it be presumptuous to fix upon particular occurrences as proofs of God's displeasure; yet none will deny that a long, unbroken, course of disasters indicates but too surely, whether to a nation or a church, that his favour is withdrawn. Within five years of the ejection of the two thousand nonconformists, London was twice laid waste.

He wasn't wrong. The Great Ejection occurred in the summer of 1662. In 1665, an epidemic of the bubonic plague struck London, killing more than 100,000 people, roughly one quarter of its population. The following year, a massive fire swept through London, incinerating more than 13,000 homes, nearly a hundred churches—including St. Paul's Cathedral—and decimating most of the city. Many historians agreed with Marsden, viewing those disasters as divine retribution for England's impenitence.

Still, those disasters don't compare to the spiritual consequences of England's apostasy. After citing the plague and the fire, Marsden continued, "Other calamities ensued, more lasting and far more terrible. Religion in the church of England was almost extinguished, and in many of her parishes the lamp of God went out."

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J. C. Ryle, who served as the bishop of Durham in the late 1800s, summed up the spiritual cost of the Anglican Church's impenitence this way: "I believe [the Great Ejection] did an injury to the cause of true religion in England, which will probably never be repaired." Indeed, over the centuries that followed, England has succumbed to a culture of liberalism, overrun with cold, dead churches and awash in apostasy and spiritual darkness.

And despite the centuries of foul fruit that sprang from the Act of Uniformity and the Great Ejection, the Church of England failed to achieve its primary goal. The Puritans were scattered, but not silenced. Many of the men who were ejected from their churches went on to have influence that continues to this day. Spiritual stalwarts such as Richard Baxter, John Flavel, Thomas Brooks, and Thomas Watson were among those who lost their pulpits in 1662 but faithfully carried on as outlaw preachers. Along with many others, they continued to expose the corruption of the Anglican Church, calling for its repentance.

The Puritans effectively carried on the legacy that began with the Reformers more than a century earlier. Luther, Calvin, Tyndale, and other key sixteenth-century Reformers participated in perhaps the greatest corporate call to repentance the world has ever seen. Their preaching and teaching transformed the medieval world, and their legacy continues into the present. ~ **Dr. John MacArthur**

What Happened on Saturday?

Jesus was crucified on Good Friday and was buried that same day. He was then raised from the dead on Easter Sunday. That brings up an important question: What happened between Friday and Sunday?

After Jesus was crucified, His friends asked for His body so that they could give Him a proper Jewish burial. Pontius Pilate granted that request and turned the body of Jesus over to Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Joseph of Arimathea gave his tomb to provide a suitable grave for our Lord.

This fulfilled the Scriptures that the Messiah would make His grave with the rich because there was no deceit on His lips or any violence in His life (Isaiah 53:9). It also fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy that not a single bone of His body would be broken, so that when He died, care was taken in the disposal of His body (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; Psalm 34:20).

Jesus' body was carefully laid in this grave after being wrapped in strips of linen and anointed with a hundred pounds of spices. When He was laid to rest in the tomb, Mary Magdalene and her friends stood vigil outside the tomb. They wanted to make sure that they knew where He was laid so that they could visit the tomb after the Jewish Sabbath and resume the anointing of Jesus' body.

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Even though Pilate had allowed the body to be given a suitable burial, he nevertheless ordered that the grave be sealed by a gigantic rock. He also posted guards there to make sure that no one disturbed it. Therefore, we know that the guards were there. But who else was there?

I have to engage in a bit of speculation here because I can't be sure of this. But we know that when the women came on Sunday morning, they were shocked to see that the stone had been rolled away. They had been worried about the stone, wondering whom they could find to move it so that they could finish the preparation of Jesus' body. And when they arrived, they saw the stone rolled away and an angel sitting on top of the stone.

Where were the guards? The Bible tells us that before the stone was rolled away, God struck the garden with an earthquake and sent an angel from heaven. The angel moved that stone out of the way, and the guards became as dead men. When the women came to see the body of Jesus, instead they saw the guards looking as though they were dead, and an angel sitting on the stone. When they looked into the tomb, Jesus was gone. But there were angels inside the tomb, one at the head where the body had lain, and the other one at the foot.

What were those angels doing in there on the morning of the resurrection? And when did they arrive? I think they were there Saturday night. I think they were also there Friday night. Let me explain why I believe this is the case.

Pilate posted his guards on the outside of the tomb, but God posted His guards on the inside of the tomb. The first function of the angels that we see in the Old Testament was instituted after Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden of Eden. God sent angels to stand by the entrance with a flaming sword, posted as sentinels, so that no human being could return to paradise.

Not only that, we see that throughout the whole earthly life of Jesus, He was attended by the presence of angels. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the angels came with a heavenly chorus outside the fields of Bethlehem, announcing His birth.

When Jesus was sent into the wilderness to be tempted for forty days by Satan, one of the temptations was as follows:

And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" (Luke 4:9–12)

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Jesus didn't have to jump off the top of the temple to know that the angels were looking after Him. And as soon as Satan left Jesus in the wilderness, the angels appeared and ministered to Him. Did the angels just come into the wilderness when Satan was leaving, or had they been there the whole time? If it's true that the Father had said that He was going to give His angels charge over the Son, I suspect that they had never left Him.

And then, at some point, somebody else was there. The women who came to anoint Jesus arrived at the crack of dawn. Darkness was still hovering near the tomb as they approached it, even though the dawn had just broken.

But by that time, Jesus had already been raised. My surmise is that it was very early Sunday morning while it was still dark that one another visitor came to the tomb. We know that Jesus was raised from the dead by God the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11).

We first encounter the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament in the very opening verses of the Bible. In the incredible act of the creation of the universe, the Spirit of God hovered over the waters, and out of the formlessness came the form of the universe. Out of the darkness, God spoke light. That was the power of God the Holy Spirit.

Fast-forward several millennia, and a young peasant Jewish girl was astonished when she was visited by an angel from heaven. This angel proclaimed what, to her, was a bizarre, unbelievable message:

And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God." (Luke 1:28–35)

When Gabriel told Mary that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her and overshadow her, it was the same language, the same imagery, that the Bible uses to speak of God's work of creation. In other words, if God could create a whole universe out of nothing, don't you think He could create an infant in the womb of this young woman? Gabriel said to Mary, "*For nothing will be impossible with God*" (Luke 1:37). And the Virgin conceived and brought forth her Son. And the same Spirit who caused her to conceive that Son in her womb visited His grave that night.

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The last question to consider is this: Why? Why was He raised? The Old Testament tells us about the Day of Atonement, on which atonement was made for the sins of the people. Animals were slaughtered, and their blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat.

But when those animals were killed, they stayed dead. The scapegoat was sent into the outer darkness, never to be heard from again. Why didn't God just leave it at that? Why didn't God, after He took our sins and transferred them to the back of His Son and sent Him to the cross as the ultimate sacrifice, as the ultimate atonement, just leave Him dead and buried?

There are a couple of reasons that God wasn't interested in leaving Jesus dead and buried. The **first** one is this: He was sinless, and death had no claim on Him. If He hadn't willingly accepted the imputation of our sins upon Him, He could never have died. But in and of Himself, there was no sin, and it was impossible for death to hold Him. People in the secular world today say about the resurrection: "How can you believe in that? That's impossible." But I say: "How can you not believe it? It's impossible that death could hold Him." **Second**, Paul declared to the Greeks at Athens,

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

Muhammad is dead. Buddha is dead. Confucius is dead. Moses is dead. Only One has been raised from the dead, because God has only one Mediator between Himself and human beings. He has one, His only begotten Son, and He has demonstrated to the world the One whom He has appointed to be the Judge of all the earth by raising Him from the dead—something that He didn't do for Muhammad.

But Paul also tells us that Jesus was raised for our justification (Romans 4:25). In one sense, Jesus was raised for His own justification because by the resurrection, God was declaring to the world, "This is my Son, and all the charges brought against Him for which He was executed are false." He therefore was vindicated by the resurrection. But again, what God was doing was not simply vindicating and justifying Jesus.

He's raised for my justification. He's raised for your justification. Why? How can that be? Because in the resurrection, God not only was declaring that Jesus is the One whom He has appointed to be the Judge but was also saying, "I accept the sacrifice that He has offered." Jesus offered Himself to satisfy the demands of God's justice and righteousness.

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Yet God said, “Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied” (Isaiah 53:11) because the Father was satisfied. He was pleased with His Son and what He had accomplished. To show His Son and the world that He had accepted His perfect sacrifice given once and for all, He raised Him from the dead and exalted Him to the right hand of the Father as the King of kings and Lord of lords. The King of kings and Lord of lords is not dead. He’s alive. And that’s why we can joyfully proclaim, “He is risen.” ~ **Dr. R.C. Sproul (1939–2017) founder of Ligonier Ministries, first minister of preaching and teaching at Saint Andrew’s Chapel in Sanford, Fla., first president of Reformation Bible College, and executive editor of Tabletalk magazine.**

Responding to God’s Call

We live in daily submission to a host of authorities who circumscribe our freedom: from parents to traffic police officers to dog catchers. All authorities are to be respected and, as the Bible declares, honored. But only one authority has the intrinsic right to bind the conscience. God alone imposes absolute obligation, and He does it by the power of His holy voice.

He calls the world into existence by divine imperative, by holy fiat. He calls the dead and rotting Lazarus to life again. He calls people who were no people “My people.” He calls us out of darkness and into light. He effectually calls us to redemption. He calls us to service.

Our vocation is so named because of its Latin root *vocatio*, “a calling.” The term vocational choice is a contradiction in terms to the Christian. To be sure, we do choose it and can, in fact, choose to disobey it. But prior to the choice and hovering with absolute power over it is the divine summons, the imposition to duty from which we dare not flee.

It was vocation that drove Jonah on his flight to Tarshish and caused his terrified shipmates to dump him in the sea to still the vengeful tempest. It was vocation that elicited the anguished cry from Paul, “*Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel*” (1 Corinthians 9:16). It was vocation that put a heinous cup of bitterness in the hands of Jesus.

The call of God is not always to a glamorous vocation, and its fruit in this world is often bittersweet. Yet God calls us according to our gifts and talents, and directs us to paths of the most useful service to His kingdom. How impoverished we would be if Jonah had made it to Tarshish, if Paul had refused to preach, if Jeremiah really had turned in his prophet’s card, or if Jesus had politely declined the cup. ~ **Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr. (1939—2017)**

Coram Deo

Think about it . . . what will be the tab of spiritual losses if you do not respond to God’s call?

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If you have a birthday or anniversary in April that is not posted here or is listed in error or you do not want to be published in this newsletter, please contact Walt or e-mail him at gwlcf10415@gmail.com.

Birthdays and Anniversaries Corner April 2026

Birthdays

*Amber H. (4)
Carol L. (7)
David A. (8)*

*Raena Grace P. (20)
Alexandra P. (26)*

Anniversaries

*Walt and Carol L. (15)
Jack and Rita B. (16)*

Reflection

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not just an event we remember—it is the foundation of everything we believe. When Jesus rose from the grave, He defeated sin, death, and the power of the enemy once and for all. On that first resurrection morning, what seemed like defeat turned into eternal victory. The tomb was empty, not because someone moved the body, but because Jesus had power over death itself. As declared in Matthew 28:6, “*He is not here: for He is risen, as He said.*” Because He lives our past can be forgiven, our present has purpose and our future is secure. The resurrection assures us that no situation is too bad for God to revive. Whether it is a broken heart, lost hope, or a weary spirit, the same power that raised Christ can bring new life to us today.



*West Suffolk Baptist
Church
Leadership*

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