

# The Reality and Imperative of the Resurrection

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**References:** **1 Corinthians 15**, Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:19-20; Luke 24:15-18; Luke 24:32; Luke 24:50-51; John 21:17; John 21:25; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 15:4-8; 1 Corinthians 15:12-19; 2 Corinthians 13:1

Let's have another quick word of prayer, and then we'll get into our message this morning. Lord, we want to thank you. We praise you that Jesus rose from the dead. And, Lord, if that hadn't happened, what a **terrible** situation it would be. So we give thanks for the reality of the resurrection. We pray that as we just pondered afresh this morning, you will deepen our understanding and that you will deepen our convictions to live for the Christ who died and rose again for us. We give thanks now. Help us, we pray. We pray both here and for all in the rest of the building. We give thanks in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

## Is the Resurrection True?

So, the resurrection. And I thought this morning maybe a little bit of an overview. I'm going to go very, very quickly over many, many points. I'm not going to spend much time defending the points that I'm going to make. They're all very important. When you put them all together, they basically say, **Jesus Christ rose from the dead**. That's really all that matters.

So we're going to look at three things. Is it true? Is it true, the resurrection? Number two: Is it imperative? What would have happened if there were no resurrection? And number three: Because Jesus died and rose again, what were sort of his **last comments** before he left?

Have you ever wondered sort of what happens at the end of life? Our father died. And he died about seven o'clock in the evening. And four o'clock in the afternoon, he said to my sister, he said, "Is **Harold** home yet?" And she said, "Well, not yet." "Well," he said, "why don't you tell **Harold** to come home? I've got a couple of things to say to him." We knew he was dying. He knew he was dying. So when I came home, I spoke to him and he spoke to me. And he said a couple of things. Now the question is, was

what he said important? And did I pay any attention? And of course the answer is yes. So our Lord Jesus went to heaven. He said some interesting things at the end. Are they important? And the answer is yes. And so we're going to try in a half an hour to cover all three of those themes. And I'm going to be going fast. And if you don't get it all, don't worry. And if you'd like more elaboration on any of them, then we can do that. But I'm just going to run quickly through all of this today.

So the first question is this: Is the resurrection true? Is the resurrection true? And the answer is yes. How would we know? And I mentioned to you earlier this morning that one of the things that's amazing is that the resurrection was first announced by **angels**. Is what angels announced important? If an angel spoke to you, would you pay attention? Yeah, I think you would. So that's the first reason we know that he rose from the dead. The angels said so.

The enemy, you remember—we don't have time to go into the details—but the enemy was told that he had risen from the dead by the soldiers who were protecting him. And they explained what happened. They ran to their bosses and they said, "We've got a problem. Jesus rose from the dead. And we weren't able to protect him. We weren't able to defend." So they put together a story. The people who worked for—the people, these people, soldiers worked for—promised them big money to tell a lie. And that's another proof of the resurrection: that the enemies were able or willing to pay much money in order to get a lie going that his disciples came and stole him away. That didn't happen that way.

So that's number two. Number three, there were **many, many witnesses**. I'm going to read you 1 Corinthians chapter 15. Let's just read the list of the witnesses. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." That's what scripture says.

[2 Corinthians 13:1 NKJV]

This will be the third time I am coming to you. "By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established."

Here are those witnesses. 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 4 reads... 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 5:

[1 Corinthians 15:4-8 NKJV]

<sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to

the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. <sup>6</sup> After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. <sup>8</sup> Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

Were there any witnesses to the fact that Jesus rose from the dead? Yes. How many? Well, we read of a lot just right there in those few verses. There were witnesses. How do you establish truth? On the basis of witnesses. So it's interesting that there were twelve disciples. One of them died; that was Judas. He killed himself because he betrayed the Lord. There were eleven left. The question is, did they believe Jesus rose from the dead? And the answer is yes. And they all, with one possible exception, they all were killed for maintaining that belief. That kind of a lie cannot be and has not been propagated elsewhere.

When thieves get together, they plan to do things, but when the pressure comes, they just don't live up to the lie. If it were a lie, all eleven of them would have had to lie. But instead of lying, they all died for the belief. I was out preaching to a group in prison one day. And when it was over, they told me that the audience was mostly murderers. And anyway, we walked away from the sermon back to the car and so on. On the way back, I was walking with one of these murderers. And I said to him, "Excuse me, but why are you here?" "Well," he says, "I killed somebody." I said, "Well, why did you do that?" "Well," he said, "actually, our business was, we used to like to break into houses in **Vancouver**. British properties is really our target. And we were breaking in there. But," he said, "my friend and I, who were in cahoots together in this business, we disagreed. So I killed him." Awfully hard to maintain a lie when the pressure is on.

All right. Why do we believe it? So the disciples died because they believed it. Why do we believe it? For 2,000 years, there have been more witnesses to the saving, transforming resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. How many Christians have lived testifying to the fact that Jesus Christ is alive in the last 2,000 years? You're going to disbelieve all of them?

What about **archaeology**? Archaeology has come up in recent years, especially, with all manner of confirmation to the truth of the Bible, and in particular to the truth of the resurrection. It's interesting. Archaeology has not ever found a non-miraculous, a non-supernatural Jesus. Archaeology refers to him as a miracle worker, as one who rose from the dead, or as one who is reputed to have been a miracle worker. It wasn't

an idea concocted afterwards. It happened way back in the beginning. It happened way back in the beginning.

And lastly, in my simplest, **prophecy**. Prophecy says Jesus rose from the dead. Prophecy says resurrection, eternal life, is part and parcel of the great message of the Bible. And prophecy confirms it. Do we believe he rose from the dead? Yes. Why? Because we're simple people. And we basically say, "I believe in facts." And the facts say Jesus rose from the dead. And the only way he can say he didn't rise from the dead is to say, "I choose to believe a lie about it." So that's theme number one.

## The Imperative of the Resurrection

Theme number two would be this: What would happen if he hadn't risen from the dead? So you've got your Bibles open to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. And the Lord raises these issues in this chapter in a very interesting way. So 1 Corinthians chapter 15. Let's just read together for sake of time, verse number 12.

[1 Corinthians 15:12-19 NKJV]

<sup>12</sup> 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? <sup>13</sup> But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. <sup>14</sup> And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. <sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. <sup>17</sup> And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! <sup>18</sup> Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup> If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

I'm wasting my time talking, and you're wasting your time listening, if Christ hasn't risen from the dead. That's how fundamental it is. Verse 15: "Yea, and we are found to be false witnesses." Paul, you're a liar. And all the other disciples are liars. And all the other preachers are liars. How many preachers have there been since the time of the resurrection from the dead when the angels started the preaching? They're all liars.

If Christ has not risen, then your faith is vain. You are yet in your sins. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then we're all guilty sinners, and there is no hope for any of us. Then they also which have fallen asleep in Christ are perished. No hope for anybody

else, either. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are, of all men, most miserable.

What if Jesus didn't rise from the dead? What if there is no resurrection? Then we have no hope. And we're just a bunch of miserable people, about 8 billion of us here on the earth right now, none of us with any hope.

At our Bible study on Wednesday night—and we have a Zoom Bible study on Wednesday night, as you know, and we have a question and answer time—at our Bible study on Wednesday night, Elaine asked the question. And it went something like this. She said, "Is it fair? Mr. So-and-so was born in darkest Africa. And he isn't healthy. And he doesn't have good food. And the neighboring tribe is fighting him all the time. And we live here. And we go la-di-da and complain about the most ridiculous things. Is that fair?"

You can broaden the question. Is God good? What kind of a God is it who brings people into the world at the same time—some of us, in the great blessings that we enjoy here in the Western culture, and others who come forth to ridiculous hardship? Is it fair? Is God good?

And the answer is **yes**, it is fair. And God is good. And you say, "How could it be fair and God be good?" And the answer is: because there is a **resurrection**. At the time of the resurrection, God will judge everyone. And each will be rewarded according to what he did with what knowledge he had. And if he had an opportunity to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior, then he will get saved. And he'll be rewarded for the hardships of this life. And if, in fact, he didn't trust the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior, then he will have to be punished because he didn't trust the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior.

It's true, though, isn't it? None of us, none of us have an absolutely identical counterpart somewhere in the world. We don't all look the same, which is amazing. But our circumstances are not all the same. And we marvel that they're all so different. And there's a God in heaven who is **just** and will bring justice to every single person in the world. How do we know that's going to happen? Because there is a resurrection. If there were no resurrection, then there's no hope. God is not good. And the bad guys won.

So the question is, is there a resurrection? And the answer is, yes, there is a resurrection. There **must** be a resurrection, or God is a bad guy. You wouldn't want to trust him. All right. So you put all that together, and what do you conclude? You say that Jesus did rise from the dead. It's all very simple. He **had** to rise from the dead.

And he **did** rise from the dead. And there's all kinds of evidence—evidence of facts and evidence of logic to prove that he rose from the dead.

## The Last Words of the Risen Christ

The question is, what are the implications of all that? And I thought, well, if you went through the implications of it, you'd probably learn a little bit about the implications if you read the very, very end of the messages of Jesus to us. So take your Bibles. Matthew chapter 28. We're going to read the end of the story of the Lord Jesus, what he did and what he said. This is how Matthew ends it. Jesus came—verse 18 of chapter 28:

[Matthew 28:18-20 NKJV]

<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

Is that important? Yes. Why? Because Jesus is the resurrection. Jesus said this just before he went up to heaven. Jesus is coming back. And when Jesus comes back, each of us will be resurrected to meet with him. And we will stand before him and he will say, "Did you do what I told you to do just before I died?" What are you going to say? And many people will say... and many people won't have enough to open their mouths. This is what Jesus is going to say. Matthew says Jesus is going to say, "Did you take the power that I gave you? And did you go into all the world and tell him about me?" What else is important? Nothing else is important. Jesus is dying. He says, "This is what I want you to do. And I'm going to be coming back. And you know I'm coming back. And you're going to meet me in the future. And I've got a pretty good idea that you now know what the question is going to be." What's the answer going to be?

So that's the way the book of Matthew ends. Go to the book of Mark. The last lines of the book of Mark, please. Chapter 16. Mark 16. And verse 19 says:

[Mark 16:19-20 NKJV]

<sup>19</sup> So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. <sup>20</sup> And they went out and

preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

What happened because Jesus rose from the dead? Well, his people go to work. And what happens? He goes **with them**. It's absolutely thrilling. Because Jesus rose from the dead, he can go with his people. You and I are not alone if you've trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. Jesus is with you. What's he going to be doing with you? Did you get it? He's going to be **working with you**. That's what he's going to do with you. "Well, I don't intend to work. I intend to play." What? "Well, I'll maybe work tomorrow." What? Jesus says, "I will go with you. I'll work with you. I'll make sure that there's evidence." Signs and miracles will follow. God will do wonderful things working with you. You work with Jesus for a while, you'll have some stories to tell about his glory and his wonder and his power. You spend your time on the golf course, you spend your time playing with **Waldo** here—will he be working with you? He works with you **if you work**.

What about the book of Luke? What's it say about what the Lord said at the end of his life in the book of Luke? Luke chapter 24 and verse 15.

[Luke 24:15-18 NKJV]

<sup>15</sup> So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. <sup>16</sup> But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. <sup>17</sup> And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" <sup>18</sup> Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?"

That's an interesting line. **Cleopas** said to the Lord Jesus—he didn't know who he was, but he said to him—"Everybody in Jerusalem knows all about the fact that Jesus Christ died. Are you a stranger? Are you the only stranger around here who doesn't know what's going on? Everybody knows what's going on. Jesus died." Remember, Jesus' death was not in secret. Everybody in Jerusalem knew it. And there were millions, probably, visitors in Jerusalem at the time who knew it.

So that's sort of the introduction there. What happened? Jesus walked with these disciples and he told them about himself. And I'm trying to find the verse now that says that he opened the scriptures... yes, number 32.

[Luke 24:32 NKJV]

And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"

What is the conclusion of the Lord being risen from the dead in the book of Luke? Answer: he **walks** with his people and he **talks** to his people and he **fills and thrills** their hearts. And if there were no other reason for believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, you'd take that one. Imagine: the God who made the universe walking with you, talking with you, and thrilling your heart. That's why Christians get together, as we did this morning, to break bread and say, "Thank you, Lord Jesus, for dying for me." Verse number 50:

[Luke 24:50-51 NKJV]

<sup>50</sup> And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. <sup>51</sup> Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.

So when did he stop **blessing** his people? He was blessing them when he was talking to them, and then he went up and he blessed them. And you can imagine that they called out and said, "Louder, please!" as he goes up and up and up, and he keeps on blessing them. And frankly, he's been blessing his people ever since. Absolutely marvelous. Are you glad Jesus rose from the dead? Of course you are.

Look at John. The book of John, and John chapter 21 and verse 17. I'm just giving some highlights here as we go, as you know. So, you remember John 21 is the story of **Peter**, who had denied the Lord, being spoken to by Jesus. Verse 17:

[John 21:17 NKJV]

He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep."

What's the last thing on the agenda of the Lord for Peter? And the answer is **restoration**. "Peter, you didn't really do it very well the other day." And the Lord said, "Peter, you go feed my sheep." Isn't it wonderful? The last messages of our Savior are

to wandering sheep like us: "Come back to me. You follow me." "And I failed." Okay. Failed yesterday. What are you going to do today? "I'm going to serve the Lord today." Marvelous, the last words there.

But there's one other that I thought I would draw your attention to. And just the very last word, the last verse of the book of John. It says:

[John 21:25 NKJV]

And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

Do you believe that? How many books could you write in order to fill **Vancouver**, fill all the houses, all the buildings, all the floors of all the buildings—how many books could be written? So when I used to read this, I used to say, "Oh, yeah, yeah." But then I started to think about it. When did Jesus begin? In eternity past. How long ago was that? That was a long time ago. What was he doing in eternity past for a long time? And you say, "Well, I don't know." Why don't you know? Because you haven't read all the books that could be written about him that he did do. If he lived in eternity past, how many books could be written about what he did? He did quite a bit, didn't he?

So you say, "Well, what difference does that make? I'll never.." What do you mean you'll never? How many of those books are going to be written in eternity future past, so that you will know what he did? How much are we going to get to know about our God? We're going to know all he did in eternity future because we're going to be with him. And he's going to tell us all he did in eternity past. Because I think a lot of these books, if not all of these books, are going to be written. So how much is there to know about God? Answer: a whole lot.

So what do you do in the meantime? You say, "Well, I guess I better follow this." Is the resurrection important? Some people go to university and they read a few books and they get a degree in history. Big deal. I never studied history. Do you know why I never studied history? I don't believe it. I like to read what God says about history. I think if I read what men said about history, they'd say something about themselves. And I told you the story before about **Winston Churchill** who simply said, "History is going to be kind to me because I intend to write it."

God is going to write history. Are you going to read it? You say, "I'm going to read that. It's going to be marvelous." Jesus rose from the dead. And we're going to get to

read all about it. And what we will know about him at the end of eternity is so much that if the words were written down, the world couldn't contain all the books that would be written. Some people say, "It's Easter. Oh, yeah, doodle-doodle. Jesus rose from the dead. Oh, yeah, some people believe that." Is there anything more important? Jesus rose from the dead.

Book of Acts. Let me read a little bit more. Acts chapter 1, verse 8. This is what it says:

[Acts 1:8 NKJV]

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

What is God's plan? Because he rose from the dead. Answer: that you and I be **witnesses**. Now, that just doesn't mean that we are to listen to other people be witnesses. That means we are to **be** the witnesses. Get your mouth open. Why can you get your mouth open? Because you'll have **power**. He promises, when he calls you to be a witness, he calls you by saying, "You be the witness, and I'll give you the power. You get in there, start talking."

Did Jesus rise from the dead? Yes. What would have happened if he hadn't? Hopelessness. What do we do because he did? We say, "I've only got one life. I'm going to tell people about Jesus."

Lord, we thank you that Jesus rose from the dead. We marvel that the facts are all on our side. We marvel that the logic is all on our side. What foolish people would we be if we were to ignore the wonderful fact that Jesus rose from the dead? Lord, may each of us say, "Yes, Jesus, I want you to be my Lord. I want you to be my Savior, and I want you to help me be your witness." We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.