

The Significance of the Resurrection

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 80-40

How we thank the Lord for the wonderful glorious music of Easter, focusing on the resurrection of our Savior, how our hearts are filled with joy this morning as we contemplate that great reality. The world, of course, at this time of year, I guess condescends to us as Christians and acknowledges that this is the time when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's always curious to me to listen to the radio and watch the news on television, which is about all I watch on television, and hear everybody talking about the fact that Christians are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's kind of nice to hear that in the mouths of people who otherwise would give no thought to it at all.

It's also sad. I was in Philadelphia last week and driving down the street and I guess they have a custom in some neighborhoods in Philadelphia, they paste rabbits and eggs all over the inside of their front window. And it was kind of curious. I was driving through one downtown section of Philadelphia and I saw a whole lot of houses with rabbits and eggs pasted to the window. The world's way of convoluting the reality of this season.

And as my thoughts, a couple of days ago, turned toward death and resurrection and I began to think about that subject and how I might share with you from God's Word regarding the resurrection of Christ, I thought I might just check out some of my other sources and there is a book on my shelf that purports to be an anthology on every subject that could be of any use or interest to any of us, it's an encyclopedia of some sorts. And I opened up to the section on death and dying. By the way, the author of the encyclopedia is Ann Landers, so I thought I ought to get right to the profound and so I went to Ann Landers' encyclopedia and read her section on death and dying. All I could say after reading it was how sad, how tragic when asked questions about death and dying to have absolutely no answer at all.

And then I took out another anthology that I have basically on philosophers through the ages. It goes way back to rather primitive times and right up to contemporary times and identifies all the famous sayings of all the famous sages, wise men, philosophers of history. And I thumbed through that rather thick book and read here and there the musings of men about the reality of death and what happens after death. And again I found that if I were a person looking for an answer I would have found none, if I were a person looking for direction I would have ended up on a dead-end street.

And then I thought well perhaps I ought to turn to poetry and so I took down the masterpieces of religious verse, massive tome of all religious and quasi-religious poetry of the years and I went to the

section on death and immortality and I read through all of the many, and myriad viewpoints and ideas and concepts and poetic expression about death and dying that were there, and every once in a while in that poetic volume I found glimpses of hope because there were some writers who understood the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And frankly, whether you're looking for a contemporary question and answer lady's opinion, or whether you're looking for the opinion of sages and wise men and philosophers of the ages and the great poets and thinkers of ancient modern times, you come down to the fact that nobody really understands death and resurrection the way Jesus Christ understands it. And that our hearts are basically drawn to Him if we want anything related to reality in regard to that issue.

And so what a happy and glorious privilege it is for me this morning to share with you that if you want to understand death and resurrection and you want to have hope in life and hope even in death, you go to the one who is best and frankly singly equipped to teach us about it, none other than our dear Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the one who said, "I am the resurrection and the life," the one who said, "Destroy this temple, or this body, and in three days I will rise again," the one who in fact did rise again and who lives and because He lives He promised you shall live also.

In examining the matter of death and resurrection from the vantage point of our Lord Jesus Christ, I just want to share with you very briefly and very simply three thoughts. First of all, Jesus is the source of resurrection truth because of what He did for others...because of what He did for others. The testimony of His understanding in relation to death and resurrection and His power in relation to death and resurrection is extremely clear as we examine what He did on behalf of others.

Let's begin in Matthew chapter 9...Matthew chapter 9. And here our dear Lord Jesus is ministering, teaching, healing, building His disciples. He is asked a question on the subject of fasting and while in the midst of answering the question, verse 18 of Matthew 9 interrupts with these words, "Behold," a word of exclamation indicating an interruption. "There came a certain ruler." Mark and Luke tell us the ruler's name was Jairus, a familiar name to any student of God's Word. In the synagogues of that time there was a board of elders. That board of elders, the older wiser men of the Jewish community sat in the seat of authority in the local synagogue and no doubt Jairus was such a man. He was seen as a ruler in his local religious community. This was a man, no doubt, with prominence. This was a man, no doubt, who had the respect of his community and as witnessed by the number of people attending the funeral of his daughter had certainly the sympathy of those who knew him and appreciated him. He probably lived in Capernaum, it's likely since that seems to be the focal point of the context. And Capernaum was the city in which Jesus probably did more of His miracles in the Galilean ministry than at any other specific place. And so, no doubt, he had heard of Jesus' power. He perhaps had witnessed Jesus' power and now because of the exigency of his daughter, he approaches Jesus for healing on her behalf. Mark and Luke give us the same account and they fill in what Matthew doesn't say and they tell us that when Jairus first came to see Jesus, his daughter was ill. She was obviously near death. He came, first of all, asking Jesus to heal her illness but then he

received word that she had died, and so Matthew simply tells us the part about his requesting that Jesus would raise her from the dead.

In verse 18 then, he comes and he has a spirit of worship, an attitude of respect. He honors the Lord with a worshipful attitude and he says, "My daughter is even now dead." And he has just received the word of this. You can imagine a broken-hearted father. He hurried to Jesus, no doubt, as rapidly as he could possibly get there, having in mind that he would then reaching Jesus be able to have Him come and heal his daughter and now has heard that she in fact is dead. And he was gone at the point of her death which adds perhaps doubly to his sorrow. My daughter is even now dead. But we see evidence of his faith. "But come and lay Your hand on her and she shall live." Now this is a man who has trust in the power of Christ. Where did it come from? No doubt because of the reputation of Jesus and perhaps because of his own personal exposure to the power of Christ in the lives of others who had been healed and perhaps even risen from the dead, he is believing the Lord can do that in behalf of his own daughter. And no doubt, there's a little bit of that hope that lingers in the heart of every person that would wish the very best, even if it were not possible..but in this case, as we shall see, it definitely is.

Without delay Jesus arose, verse 19 said, and followed him and so did His disciples. Jesus with the entourage of disciples and no doubt some of the crowd lingering along, moves then toward the home of Jairus. On the way, in verse 20, a woman who had been diseased with an issue of blood for twelve years, came behind Him, touched the hem of His garment and so doing was wonderfully healed from that hour, verse 22 says. And so there is the interlude of the healing of that woman as they move to the house of Jairus.

Then in verse 23, "When Jesus came into the ruler's house and saw the musicians," literally in the Greek text, "the flute players." Flutes were the most common of all musical instruments, perhaps rivaled only by simply made harps, but flutes were very common because of the many reeds in the land of Palestine and almost anyone could take a reed and cut it off and properly hallow it out and put some holes in it to make the variations necessary to play different notes and therefore when there was a time of funeral like this, people would come bringing their homemade handmade flutes and play their dirges at the funeral.

Furthermore you'll notice verse 23 there were some people just there making noise. Now that's really to us a rather foreign kind of thing. When we go to a funeral today it's a quiet, quiet thing. At best we have an organ playing somber music, not a whole lot of people playing a whole lot of tunes on a whole lot of flutes and everybody is sort of quiet and pensive and serious. But in those ancient times it was customary that when you had a death in your family, people came who were paid mourners and their job was to moan and groan and cry and wail and yell. And so a funeral would be a very different experience than we would know it...people blowing their sad songs on their flutes and other people just wailing and moaning and groaning because they were paid to do that. And there was, no

doubt, added to that some genuine sorrow on the part of the family and intimate friends. To put it mildly it would be a rather chaotic scene into which the Lord stepped. That's reflected in what He said in verse 24. "He said to them, Go away," simply stated that's the text...go away, "For the maid is not dead but sleeps."

Now I need to explain that statement. What did He mean by that? Did He mean that she was in a semi-coma, that she was in some kind of a swoon other than actual death? No...she was dead. The father acknowledged that. The word had come to him regarding that. There was obviously no breath in her and sufficient hours had passed to affirm that. But when Jesus says she is not dead but sleeps, He is using a term that is frequently used in the New Testament to speak of death as a temporary state. She is not dead in the sense of a permanent situation, she is dead only in the sense of a temporary one, best described as sleep. In fact, when it talks about believers being dead, it talks about believers being asleep, doesn't it? Many of those that sleep shall awake to righteousness. Even Daniel said that. Those of us who sleep in Christ Jesus will God bring with Him. And in 1 Corinthians many believers because of their sin had fallen asleep.

In other words, sleep was the New Testament way and even on one occasion at least in the Old Testament of expressing death when it was temporary because God was going to raise the person. We find such usage of the word "sleep" used many, many times in the New Testament. In fact, in perhaps the most common one, 1 Thessalonians 4:14, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." That is the full verse of the one I mentioned a moment ago.

So when Jesus speaks of sleep, when Paul speaks of sleep, they're talking about a state of death that is temporary and anticipates an imminent resurrection. So Jesus is not denying that breath has gone out of her, He is not denying that she has a heart that has ceased to pump, lungs that have ceased to function, a brain that has ceased to send out its impulses, but rather He is saying her state is but a temporary one from which she will momentarily awake. In John 11 we shall see in a moment that Jesus speaking of Lazarus said, "Our friend has fallen asleep." Why did He choose to use that term? Because He was about to raise him from the dead and his state was one of temporary death which was much more like sleep.

Now again notice what happened. The maid is not dead but sleeps. "And they laughed Him to scorn." Now that will tell you that they were hired mourners because their mourning turned immediately to mockery. There was no legitimate sadness on the part of these paid musicians and paid mourners, as their attitude toward Jesus Christ obviously demonstrated. They laughed Him really to scorn means they were laughing Him down literally. They laughed Him down. The thought that that death of that young girl could be overturned and that it was only a temporary sleep was ridiculous. And they even understood the term "sleep" to mean that this was only temporary because Jesus had not yet said He would raise her, He just said go away, the maid is not dead she's just

sleeping, and they mocked that thought that she could be restored to life. But in verse 25 when the people were all put out, He went in and we know from the other gospels that Peter, James and John were also there, He took her by the hand and Mark says He said, "Talitha cumi," which means "little girl, arise." And the maid arose. And the fame of this went abroad into all that land. He raised her from the dead.

Now when you want to know about death and dying, frankly, folks you don't go to Ann Landers, you don't go to some poet, you don't go to some sage or wise men, if you want to know about death and dying you go to the one who has the keys of death and hell, the one who was dead, is alive forevermore, you go to the one who is the giver of life and the restorer of life, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at Luke chapter 7. In Luke chapter 7 we come to verse 11 and the Lord Jesus with a large multitude of people including His disciples comes near the gate to a city called Nain. And He has a large crowd with Him, following along as He ministers. And as verse 12 opens they come near to the gate of the city. And approaching the gate there is a dead man being carried out, the only son of his mother and she was a widow so that there are no remaining men in her family to care for her. And many people of the city were with her. Here comes a typical Jewish funeral procession. I had occasion on one visit to Bethlehem to enter the city gate of Bethlehem and run into exactly this scene. So this particular approach to a funeral is one that still is practiced by many in that land. I came through the gate of Bethlehem headed toward the church that is there. And out of that courtyard area came this large group of people and they were carrying certain things in their hands and holding on the shoulders of some of them a casket which was borne the body, I think, of a young boy. They were proceeding with some chanting out the gate to bury the body. This is typically the very scene that Jesus ran into, a common scene for this was the way funerals were conducted.

Here is the Lord of life meeting death. Here is the Lord of joy meeting sorrow. And to compound things, not only is the young man dead but the widowed mother is not utterly bereft of any male support protection at all. And yet Jesus with great compassion in verse 13 sees her and says to her, "Do not go on weeping, stop your crying." This is a command. First command, He commands the woman to stop crying. "And He came and touched the bier, or the casket, and they that bore him stood still." The procession stops in its tracks as Jesus lays His hand on the casket. "And He said, "Young man, I say unto you, arise." And some have suggested that it was important for Jesus to say, "I say unto you" because He had so much power that had He just said "arise" every grave would have yielded its victim. "I say unto you, arise." First He commanded the mother to stop crying and then He commanded the young man to come to life.

Verse 15, "And he that was dead sat up." That verb translated "sat up" is only used two times in the New Testament, here and in Acts 40 and in both cases it is used of persons restored to life from the dead. And so the New Testament reserves the use of that word with reference to resurrection. The young man comes to life.

Now you can imagine what happened at the funeral, an incredible and startling thing. And the reaction in verse 16, "Fear, terror." Why? Because they knew they were in the presence of the power of God for only God can give life. "And they glorified God and affirmed not completely sure who this was that at least He was a great prophet raised up among us and through Him God has visited His people." They saw the power of God coming through the person of Christ. And their reaction was fear and glorifying God. "And the rumor of Him went forth throughout all Judea, throughout all the region around about." The word spread that this one through the power of God had raised the dead.

John chapter 11, we look at next that familiar account of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, a little family of dear friends to Jesus and His disciples. They lived in Bethany which is about two miles east of Jerusalem down the back slope of the plateau of the city on the way to Jericho. And Lazarus in this particular setting has died. Verse 11, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." In other words, again Jesus treats the deadness of Lazarus as a temporary situation calling it sleep.

Down to verse 17, "Then when Jesus came, when He arrived in Bethany, He found that he had lain in the grave four days already." The Jews have had a tradition. Their tradition says that after the fourth day the spirit which has hovered over the body departs because the body no longer is recognizable due to decomposition. And so, in a sense, according to their tradition, Lazarus was good and dead. And Jews did not embalm. They put no fluid inside the body. They replaced no blood. And so they retarded no decay. All they did was anoint the exterior of the body with spices to try to mitigate the stench that would come from a decaying form. And so the Word of God says that Jesus approached Bethany at a time when Lazarus had been dead and in the grave for four days.

There were many in verse 19 of the Jews who had come to comfort Martha and Mary concerning their brother. And Martha, as soon as she heard Jesus was coming went out and met Him and Mary sat in the house. And then said Martha to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here my brother had not died." If You had only come sooner he wouldn't have died. But Jesus delayed His coming because He wanted him dead because He wanted to demonstrate His power in resurrection.

But she said in verse 22, "I know that even now whatever You will ask of God, God will give it to You." And again, she like Jairus hopes for resurrection. "And Jesus said to her, Your brother shall rise again. And Martha said to Him, I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." She says my theology tells me about eschatology, I know there's coming a last day resurrection. She thought He was referring to that. "He said, I am the resurrection," not I will be but I am, to emphasize that this is not a future resurrection of which I speak but a present one. And then that great statement, "He that believeth in Me though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never really die. Do you believe this?" He was able to give life, able to give life physically, able

to raise the dead then, able to raise the dead in the future. And to make His point very, very clear, in verse 39 they arrive at the tomb. It is a cave, says verse 38, and there's a stone over it. And Jesus said, and this is a very traumatic scene, "Take away the stone, remove the stone."

Martha just can't handle it. "The sister of him who was dead said to Him, Lord by this time he stinketh." Good King James English...he's been dead four days. "Please, Lord, we don't want to see our brother like that. We don't want to see him rotted and decomposed and filled with maggots for there was nothing hermetically sealed about that kind of tomb. We don't want to see that. Please don't expose us to that rottenness."

"Jesus said to her, Didn't I say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God, Martha?" I'm calling for your faith. "And then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me and I knew that Thou hearest Me always but because of the people who stand by I said it that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me." In other words, Jesus prayed not so much because He wanted to reconnect with God as if He had been disconnected, but He prayed to God in order to identify Himself with God in the face of all those who watched. He wanted the whole of that company to realize that He was there as the representative of God the Father, that He in fact was one with God the Father, that God the Father had sent Him. And so He connects Himself with His Father. And the use of the word "Father" speaks of common essence. He is affirming that He is the Son of God connected to God the Father so they will know that.

And then in verse 43, "When He had thus spoken He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out." And again He said Lazarus to qualify it or every grave would have yielded up its victim. "And he that was dead came out, bound hand and foot with grave clothes, his face was bound about with a cloth. Jesus said to them, Loose him and let him go. And Lazarus was reunited with his family. Many of the Jews who came to Mary and had seen the things that Jesus did believed on Him." That's resurrection power...incredible that He can raise the dead.

One other illustration comes in Matthew chapter 27, would you turn to that for a moment? Matthew chapter 27, and I want to draw your attention to the very moment of the death of Jesus Christ as recorded in verse 50. "Jesus when He had cried again with a loud voice yielded up the spirit." That records the death of Christ, yielded up the spirit. Immediately some things happened. First of all, the veil of the temple, verse 51, was torn in two from the top to the bottom and that indicates that the way to God was wide open. The Old Testament ceremonial system, the priestly system, the Holy of Holies as a hidden place where God dwelt apart from men only to be approached by a special priest on a special day was set aside and there was open access to everyone to the presence of God. The rending of the veil of the temple ended Judaism as such and ushered in the new covenant, access to God. Furthermore the earth began to quake and the rocks began to split and the graves were opened and many bodies of the saints that slept were raised and came out of the graves.

Imagine saints came out of their graves at the death of Christ. We don't know how many. We don't know whether it was dozens, hundreds, or thousands of them...but a mass resurrection occurred at the moment of the death of Christ. And then it says after His resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared unto many. Can you imagine what that scene was like? It was after Jesus' resurrection because He, according to prophecy, was to be the firstfruits of those that were raised from the dead. And so they were out of the graves but didn't go into the city until Jesus' resurrection. And so here is Jesus alive and saints are pouring into the city who have been risen from the dead. Can you imagine the knocks on the doors of their familiar homes? Can you imagine a knock on a door and someone goes and all of a sudden great-grandfather is there who has been dead for 60 years and he's saying, "Say, could I join you for dinner?" And imagine that widow is there and a knock on the door and her husband arrives and says, "Dear, I'm home?" She can't handle it, he's alive. And then she begins to check with some of her friends and some of the people from their families who were true saints of God have reappeared and are alive. It's amazing.

Jesus Christ has the power to raise one. He has the power to raise many. He has the power to raise all, as we shall see in a moment. So when you want to know about death and resurrection, you go to the one who has proven that He can raise the dead. He has that power...the kind of power that stops decay, the kind of power that reverses rigor mortis, the kind of power that pours new life into rotted organs, that starts a bloodless heart beating and pumping fresh new blood, the kind of power that creates new tissue and muscle and bone and flesh, the kind of power that creates blood out of nothing, that take sightless decomposing eyes and gives them back their sight with fresh new tissue, the kind of power that takes decayed eardrums and makes them alive again to vibrate with the sounds of life, the kind of power that touches the tongue that is decayed and rotted and makes it sing again...that's the power of Jesus Christ. And when you want to know about death and you want to know about resurrection, you go to Him because of what He did for others.

But secondly, you go to Jesus Christ because of what He did for Himself. Look at Matthew 28, the next chapter from 27 at which we just looked, and we read it this morning, the first nine verses. The record says it was long after the Sabbath, the Sabbath ended at sundown on Saturday, long after the Sabbath, verse 1 says, at the dawning, that is the dawning of the first day of the week, the day we know as Sunday...the Jews called it Sabbath plus one because they had no names for the days. This is the day after Sabbath. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary and Mark tells us Salome was there, the mother of James and John, and Luke tells us that Joanna was there, the women from Galilee who had ministered to Christ and were there at the foot of the cross while all the disciples defected, these dear women came back to the grave. The other gospel records tell us they came back to put more spices on the body. As I said earlier regarding Lazarus, they did not embalm the bodies, the Jews did not, but they wrapped them in spices and the women perhaps because Sabbath came so fast on Friday night that they couldn't complete the job waited until Sabbath ended, got up early Sunday morning, went back to finish anointing the body with spices as a common act of human kindness to

mitigate the decomposition and the stench of that body, they came out of sympathy, they came out of love, they came out of compassion. And by the way, Mark 16:3 says they didn't know the tomb had been sealed with a stone and sealed over then with a Roman seal which could not be broken and that it was guarded by Roman soldiers and that they really would not be allowed access. Not knowing that they came. "Behold, there was a great earthquake," not just an earthquake but a great one.

And what caused the earthquake? The resurrection of Christ? No. An angel of the Lord descended from heaven and when the angel hit the ground and rolled back the stone and sat on it, it created an earthquake. They came simultaneously. The great earthquake, the stone rolls away, the angel is sitting on the stone. And what an angel he was. "His countenance was like lightning," that is that shining emanating glory. "And his raiment was white as snow," brilliant dazzling creature. "And for fear of him the guards did shake and fell over in a dead faint." They were just knocked out with sheer terror.

May I remind you that the angel did not come to let Jesus out? The one who had in Himself the power of life didn't need someone to open the door. If He could come out of the dead He could sure get out of the cave. The angel rolled the stone away not to let the Lord out but to let the world in. The point was not so Jesus could escape but so that the watching world could see that He was gone. And so it says in verse 4 that the guards fell in a dead faint, the angel answered and said to the women who arrived, "Don't be afraid." Why? They were fearful. Why? Here was the guard lying down in a dead faint, the stone was rolled away, the shining brilliant glorious angel is sitting on the stone...it's obvious that they would have cause for great fear and terror. But he says, "Don't be afraid, I know you seek Jesus who was crucified, He is not here." He had already gone. The resurrection occurred before the earthquake, before the arrival of the angel, before the stone was rolled away. He has already gone. He is not here...and the Greek says, "For He was raised," aorist passive. He was raised, obviously we read in Romans chapter 1, by the power of the Father and, of course, His own power as well as indicated in John's gospel. Chapter 10, the Lord Jesus was raised and He was already gone, come and see the place where the Lord was lying. And now in verse 7, "Go quickly, tell His disciples He's risen," or literally again He was raised, "and behold He goes before you to Galilee, you'll see Him. Lo, I've told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear, now it's mixed with...what?...great joy. And they ran to bring the disciples word. And as they're going along Jesus met them and offers the common greeting, All hail," chairō te, it's a common greeting. He greets them. And they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. They recognized Him. They recognized who He was and they held on.

The evidence for His resurrection, absolutely overwhelming. Empty tomb, grave clothes lying in the proper place folded neatly, no violent stealing of the body. The grave clothes, the empty tomb, the witness of a heavenly angel that He was raised and the eyewitnesses who saw Him alive after they had seen Him dead, the very women who had put spices on His body and wrapped the cloths around each leg and each arm and the body itself, for that's the way they wrapped them, they had handled

that body, they knew there was no life in it and now they can give testimony that He is alive, the holy angel gives testimony that He is alive, the open tomb gives testimony that He is alive. And what does this mean? It means the Word of God is true because Jesus said, "Destroy this body and I'll raise it up." It means Jesus is the Son of God for He proved Himself to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead, Romans 1:4 says. It means our salvation is complete for Romans 4:25 says He was raised for our justification. It means the church is established for He said, "I'll build My church and the gates of Hades," a euphemism for death, "will not prevail against it."

Everything that Jesus had promised was accomplished. It means heaven is waiting for us because He said, "If I go I go to prepare a place for you and I will come again and receive you unto Myself that where I am there you may be also and I'm preparing you a room in My Father's house," John 14:1 to 3. Jesus was risen from the dead.

I say to you that if you want to know about resurrection, you go to the one who was raised from the dead, who not only could raise others but Himself was raised. And the evidence is culminated, look at verse 11, in the most amazing way. "And when these women were moving along headed toward the disciples to tell them Jesus was alive, some of the guard," that's the Roman guard, "from the tomb came into the city and showed the chief priests all the things that were done." Now they had been commissioned, although they belonged to Pilate in terms of the proper hierarchy, Pilate was a Roman representative and they were Roman soldiers and they owed their allegiance to Pilate, they had been commissioned to work in behalf of the Jewish leaders on this matter of securing the tomb of Jesus. And so they went back to report to those who had the delegated authority over them and they showed them all the things that were done. What does that mean? The body went into the tomb, the stone was rolled over the tomb, the stone was sealed, we were put on guard, we kept our watch, but there was a tremendous earthquake, the stone was rolled away, there was an angel on the stone who was so frightening that we fell over and were as dead men. When we had come to our senses the body was gone.

They told the whole story. All the supernatural phenomena, the grave clothes lying perfectly neatly in one place as if someone calmly, resolutely, deliberately got up, moved out, unhurried. They gave the whole report. And here in the mouth of unbelieving Roman soldiers is the testimony to the validity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is not some hallucination by people who so desperately wanted Jesus to be alive that they hallucinated a resurrection. This is the calm, cold, calculating report of neutral Roman soldiers who anticipated absolutely nothing but explained the phenomena supernatural and the absence of the body.

Notice the response of the Jewish leaders. They called a meeting of the Sanhedrin in verse 12. And they took counsel. The result of the counsel is this, they gave the soldiers much money. Strange, isn't it? A Roman soldier who lost his prisoner paid with his...what?...his life. But in this case there was no like given, in fact just the opposite, they paid them a lot of money. Why would they pay them

a lot of money? You say, "Well they paid them for reporting the truth." Hardly. They didn't pay them a lot of money for telling the truth. They paid them a lot of money and then said this, verse 13, "Say that His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we slept." Now you don't even have to be half bright to know how stupid a story that is. You tell me how they know the disciples came and stole His body if they were asleep? It's ludicrous. You say the disciples came and stole the body while we slept. Sure. What kind of credibility does a tale like that have? If you were asleep, how do you know what happened? The fact was they didn't fall asleep until they were knocked into a semi-coma by the glory of the angel. But they were bought off, this is bribery.

Here you have then not only the neutral testimony of Roman soldiers to the resurrection of Christ but you have the bizarre testimony of the Jewish leaders to the reality of the resurrection which they never even investigated. They never went to the tomb, looked, checked. They never sought the angel...nothing. They said, "Look, we got to cover this up." And by bribing the soldiers for a coverup gave testimony to the reality of what they were trying to hide. So you have not only the testimony of the neutral Roman soldiers but you have the testimony of the enemies of Jesus Christ who tried to cover up the resurrection by buying off the soldiers. And they even promised them in verse 14 that if it came to the governor's ears that they had lost their prisoner, we will persuade him and secure you, meaning you won't have to lose your life. So the soldiers took the money, did as they were taught. And it worked. The bribed to lie and the spread of the lie resulted in a common report among the Jews until the writing of Matthew's gospel that indeed the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus. No investigation, just bribery.

Isn't that amazing? You have the testimony, the positive testimony of the empty tomb, the testimony of the angel, the testimony of the eye witnesses. You have the neutral testimony of the Roman soldiers who are dispassionate, they're simply standing in the middle of this affair they don't care about and they attest to the resurrection. And then you have the negative, hateful, godless, anti-gospel testimony of His enemies who say He rose from the dead by virtue of the bribery to cover it up. Yes, Jesus rose from the dead. Died on the cross for the sins of the world. Rose again to secure the justification of all who put their faith in Him. And so when you want to know about resurrection, you go to the one not only who raised the dead but who Himself was raised from the dead and said, "Because I live you shall live also."

And finally, and third in our little list of reasons why Jesus is the authority, we go to Him for resurrection truth because of what He did for others, what He did for Himself and because of what He will do for all men. What He will do for all men. This may surprise some of you but do you realize that some day in the future and very likely the not-to-distant future every human being who ever lived on the face of the earth will rise from the dead? Do you realize that? Not just Christians, every human being will rise from the dead...all men, good men, evil men will be raised in a literal resurrection. Get this, they will be give an eternal body...some of them will get a body that will fit them eternally for heaven, and some of them will get a body that will fit them eternally for hell. But

everyone will rise and everyone will be given an eternal body in which they will experience eternal glory or eternal pain...that's the promise of Scripture. The Jesus who has raised people from the dead, the Jesus who was Himself raised from the dead is the Jesus who will raise all the dead.

Notice John chapter 5 and verse 25. Jesus says, "Truly, truly I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is," in other words, the hour of the Messiah, Christ's hour, the hour when He comes, "when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live." And there He has in mind, I believe, the spiritual resurrection, spiritual new life, salvation. There I think He's talking about the regenerate life, that is being born again. He's saying that the Son of Man is now giving life to those that are spiritually dead, those that believe in Him, those that receive Him as Savior.

But there's another resurrection, not just that spiritual life out of death that all of us who believe experience. But down in verse 28, "Marvel not for the hour is coming," it's not already here but it's coming, "the hour of spiritual resurrection is here and Christ will give you new life now but there is an hour coming that's not yet here in which all that are in the graves will hear His voice and will come forth."

Dear friends, I want to tell you that no one who has ever lived will escape the resurrection, except those that are caught up in the air to be with the Lord in the Rapture. But the mass of humanity of all the ages will all rise from the dead. Notice, "Some that have done good," that is their life is a life of righteousness which gives evidence that God is in their life, they live out the righteousness of God within, "will come forth unto the resurrection of life." In other words, they'll enter in to the fullness of eternal life. And those who have done evil, giving evidence of the fact that they're unregenerate, unredeemed, unchanged sinner will come forth to the resurrection of damnation. The key thought, the end of verse 28, "All that are in the graves will hear His voice," and verse 29, "and will come forth." You will rise from the dead.

When a person dies their spirit leaves this world. If you're a Christian, your spirit goes to be with Christ. If you're not a Christian and you've not received the Lord Jesus and accepted His death and resurrection on your behalf, your spirit goes away from God, out of His presence into eternal darkness, eternal punishment, eternal pain...which we know as hell. Those places are occupied by the spirits of men. But the day is coming when God will give to those spirits in glory and those spirits in hell eternal form, eternal bodies...and that at the great and final resurrection.

For those who love God, who know Jesus Christ, we have the hope of glorified bodies like His glorified body. John says we'll be like Him. For those who know not Christ, who receive not His salvation, they will get a body, not a body fit for heaven but a body fit for hell, not a body fit to manifest the glory of God but a body fit to burn forever and ever be consumed. Jesus then is the source of resurrection truth. He came and raised the dead. He Himself was raised and He will come again to raise all the dead of all the ages and send them to that place for which He will prepare a

resurrection body.

I guess that brings us to two simple questions. Do you understand the reality of death and resurrection? Have you looked in the right place? Have you been listening to the right teacher? Have you considered the Lord Jesus Christ who is alive even now and in our midst this day? Have you considered the Lord of life who is the resurrection and the life? Have you considered that if you believe in Him in the real sense you will never die? Or have you been looking for the answers to life and death in the literature of people who don't know? And are you headed for the resurrection of damnation to be fitted to spend eternity without God?

Listen again to the words that Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Do you believe this? That's the question. And my prayer is that God will enable you by His Spirit to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, to confess that God has raised Him from the dead and acknowledged that He is Lord and master and Savior and receive Him into your own heart. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we remember the words of Jesus who said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." Everything we need to know about life and death and eternity is bound up in Christ. How thankful we are. We bless Your name for the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I pray, O God, for anyone in this place who is headed for the resurrection that leads to damnation, the resurrection that will provide a form in which their soul can be tormented forever out of the presence of God. I pray, O Lord, that You would draw them to the Savior and that they would come out of darkness into light, that they would come out of the night of sin into the dawn of righteousness, that they would know the hope in the heart of every believer, the hope of eternal life and glory in the presence of Jesus Christ. We thank You that You died on the cross to pay the penalty for all of our sin and that You have offered to us the gift of salvation if we will but believe and receive that gift. To that end we pray for every person here. Amen.

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