The Why, Who, and How of the Resurrection

Acts 10:34-43A - John MacArthur

If you had the opportunity over the last couple of weeks to read the latest issues of Time magazine, Newsweek and US News and World Report, you would have noted that each of them had a cover story on Jesus, two of them titled the story, the search for the real Jesus, or something like that, and the other had to do with the resurrection. Each of those magazines interacted with some pseudo scholars whose academic credentials are intended to hide their rejection of the truth.

As I read through those articles I was informed by these men that Jesus was someone other than what the Scripture presents. In fact, they gave a long list of who Jesus really was. The interesting thing was, a number of scholars were interviewed and none of them agreed on who He was. But here are their suggestions. He was a secular sage. He was a cynical revolutionary. He was a mystic healer, a Jewish Socrates, a liar, the first stand-up Jewish comic, the Lenny Bruce of His day, a subversive, a revitalizer of the nation Israel, Jewish mystic, a revolutionary peasant, a preacher of radical justice, a resister of Roman oppression, a political animal, a wordsmith spinning little aphorisms and telling funny stories, and so forth.

He didn't heal anybody of anything, He just cured false consciousness. And His body was eaten by dogs at the foot of the cross. Such people in the name of academia twist the Scripture to their own eternal destruction. They say that the resurrection was not real, but the people wanted Jesus to be alive and so in a series of inter-psychic experiences they induced some kind of fantasy in their minds that resulted in a renewed sense of missionary zeal and spiritual self-confidence. There was, however, no resuscitation of the corpse of Jesus, they all agree on that. There was no resurrection. And all such claims are erroneous. In fact, it is the Christian establishment that has transformed the purely human Jesus into a divine Son of God.

Where do they get these conclusions? Well, interestingly enough Newsweek Magazine makes quite a confession. When Newsweek acknowledges, quote: "That there have been no new data on Jesus since the gospels were written," end quote. Now if there's no new information, where are they getting these ideas? The answer, it's the same old liberal damning lies that come from those who deal with Jesus not on an intellectual basis, not on a historical basis, not on a scholarly basis at all, but purely on a moral basis. And they do not like the Jesus of the New Testament because He confronts their sin and He threatens judgment. And consequently, they wanting to hold to their sin, invent a Jesus more to their liking.

Over against Newsweek, Time and US News and World Report, and all the anti-Christ minds and all their books stands the Bible, the Word of God. And you can choose. I'm going to take you now to what the Bible teaches about Jesus. It's summed up magnificently in the text I read earlier. You may turn in your Bible, if you wish, to *Acts chapter 10* and we're going to look at those verses together.

Peter is the speaker here. Peter is preaching. He's preaching to a group of Gentiles who really have no connection with Israel. In fact the main individual to whom Peter is preaching is a man by the name of Cornelius. Cornelius was a Roman soldier, an officer in the Roman army, an officer of some significance and some prominence, a man who had great responsibility, a centurion of what was called the Italian battalion.

Cornelius really had no Jewish links. He had no Jewish heritage. He was a Gentile. Peter preaches to him the straight forward simple gospel. In so doing he tells us the significance of the resurrection. It's a simple message from Peter. It's not complicated. It's not hard to understand. And yet it cannot be improved upon. It would be enough really to read it and leave and have it make its impression, but we are behooved to give you the understanding of it and that we will endeavor to do this morning.

Just by way of a general background, all of apostolic preaching focused on the resurrection. If you take the resurrection out of the gospel, you have no gospel. In verse 42 Peter says that the Apostles were ordered to preach. And they were ordered to preach the gospel which at the heart was to preach the

resurrection. The *book of Acts* is the chronicle of the church after the resurrection of Christ. It tells the story of the preaching of the gospel and the building of the church in the early years. And it begins with these words...*chapter 1 of Acts and verse 1, "The first account I composed,"* that being the gospel of Luke, *"Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day when He was taken up,"* that's His ascension, "*after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the Apostles whom He had chosen. To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many convincing proofs appearing to them over a period of forty days."*

After His suffering on the cross, after His death, He was placed in the grave, He arose from the grave. He was then presenting Himself alive over a period of forty days to His disciples, demonstrating that He in fact was risen by many convincing proofs. This resurrection then becomes the heart of apostolic preaching, the heart of the gospel, the heart of the good news. In chapter 2 Peter launches to preach the first sermon. In verse 22 here is how he begins. *"Men of Israel, listen to these words. Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know,"* they could not deny the tremendous miracles Jesus had done in their midst. *"This Man...verse 23...delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death." Verse 24, "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power."* The first sermon focuses on the resurrection. In verse 32 of that sermon, Peter again says this Jesus, God raised up again to which we are all witnesses.

Peter preaches again in chapter 3, you can look down to verse 13. Peter is preaching and he says, *"The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers has glorified His servant Jesus, the One whom you delivered up and disowned in the presence of Pilate when he had decided to release Him, but disowned the holy and righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you but put to death the Prince of Life, the One whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses."* All the early preachers were preaching as eyewitnesses to the resurrection. Over at the end of the chapter, chapter 3 verse 26, Peter again says, *"For you first, God raised up His servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways."* The point is, He rose from the dead, God raised Him from the dead in order that He might come to bless you by turning you from your sins. He rose for the forgiveness of sins.

Again in chapter 4 and verse 10, Peter preaching, *"Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene whom you crucified whom God raised from the dead, by this name, this man stands here before you in good health."* And again Peter is preaching the resurrection. Over in verse 33 it says, *"And with great power the Apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and abundant grace was upon them all."* Chapter 5, again Peter and the Apostles speaking in verse 30, *"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross."*

Now what is the truth about Jesus? The truth is, He lived, He died, He rose again. And there is no data past the gospel record, the record of the New Testament that clearly indicates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the theme of all preaching. And so when we come to chapter 10 we are not surprised that Peter this time not preaching to Jews, not preaching in Jerusalem to the Jews, but now preaching down on the Israel coast to a Gentile and his household, preaches the resurrection. The resurrection is the good news.

Now I want us to look at this simple straight-forward message. I can't improve upon it, I can't embellish it, I want only to make it clear so that you understand what the gospel of the resurrection is. And I want to simply ask three questions...why, who and how. Why this good news is good news. Who makes it possible. How can I participate in it.

Why? Verse 34 through 36 gives us the answer. Three reasons are given for the gospel. Three reasons why this is good news. Number one, God is partial to no one. Number two, God welcomes sinners. Number three, God makes peace with them. That just steps you through the reasons for the gospel. God is an impartial

judge who receives sinners and makes peace with them. In other words, you can have a relationship with God in which He ceases to be your judge and becomes your friend, your deliverer, your Savior. You need that because you are under judgment and so was I and so are all who have not come to God through Christ.

Let's just begin with that first component that God is impartial, partial to no one. Look at verse 34, *"And opening his mouth Peter said, `I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality.'"* Now that is purely a statement about the essence of God's nature. God is impartial. God is, in the Old English, no respecter of persons. God has no favorites. He is impartial.

Now initially what does that mean? That means initially that God judges everyone the same without respect for who they are or for that matter, what they have accomplished. Or what their social or economic status might be. And that is exactly what we are reminded of in *1 Peter* when Peter writes his first epistle, *chapter 1 verse 16*, God says, "*You shall be holy for I am holy."* There's the standard. God requires spiritual perfection, absolute holiness, perfect sinlessness. And in verse 17 Peter says, *"He judges impartially according to each man's work."* There is the issue. God is an impartial judge who has a standard of perfect holiness and measures everybody against that standard...no matter who they are.

No sinner can escape that reckoning, no sinner can escape that judgment and that justice because of any privilege, any achievement, any accomplishment. *Colossians 3:25* says, *"He who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done and that without partiality."* God is going to judge all according to the perfect standard. That is why the Bible is so clear *that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.* That is why it says in the same book, the *book of Romans*, that *all come short of the standard* in this sense, *there is none good, no not one. There is none that understands, there is none that does right.*

And so it is that God as an impartial judge holding everybody to the same standard is forced to damn everybody. Judgment culminating in eternal punishment. That's the facts. And God is an impartial judge. It doesn't matter how many good efforts you've made or how many things you've tried to accomplish in your life or how successful you've been at being nice or kind, it doesn't matter whether you're religious or irreligious, if you come short of the standard, you're doomed.

But it means more than that and particularly here in this context. When Peter says I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, he is not simply talking about in judgment, but he is talking about in salvation. God is also impartial in that regard. And that is the primary emphasis here. Peter is beginning to understand that God's grace can be extended to all men without regard for their circumstances, without regard for their morality or immorality, and without regard for their nationality. In fact, that's of great concern in this particular context since he is preaching to a Gentile and it is only been very recently that Peter himself had a vision in which God showed him that he was to go and preach the gospel to the Gentiles. God shows no partiality.

According to *Romans chapter 10 and verse 12*, it cannot be said any more explicitly than it is said there. This is what it says in verse 12, *"There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him."* It doesn't matter whether you're a Jew or Gentile, if you come and call upon Him He will impartially save. This, by the way, may have seemed like a new truth to Peter, but it wasn't. All the way back in *Deuteronomy 10:17* it says, "*For the Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty and the awesome God who does not show partiality.* " In fact, *God has stopped the mouths of the whole world of sinners, every mouth is stopped according to Romans 3:19, and the whole world has become accountable to God.*

And then it turns right around and says there is righteousness for all from God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe for there is no distinction. All have sinned and come short. And all can be redeemed who come, there is no distinction.

Peter is speaking, as I said, in the house of a Gentile soldier, the first movement of the gospel to the Gentiles. And he is reminded that all men are guilty sinners under the same divine judgment and yet all are to hear the

good news that God gives eternal life to all who believe without regard for their situation, whether they are blasphemers of the worst order, whether they are murderers, injurious and all of that, describes the Apostle Paul, or whether they are good and upright and kind, it does not matter. This is the good news that man in the terrible condition of sin under the judgment of God, no matter how bad his condition, can come to a God who will not refuse him on the basis of any distinction.

In fact, look at verse 35, the second point, God welcomes sinners, *"But in every nation...without regard for nationality,* as I said...*in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him."* This is a very important verse. The man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. Now he's preaching this to Cornelius and his family. He's preaching the gospel, listen, to an unsaved Gentile.

Over in chapter 11 Peter is rehearsing, verse 12, *"The Spirit told me to go without misgivings, and these six brethren also went with me and we entered the man's house."* He's reporting the whole account of what happened with Cornelius. And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, *"Send to Joppa and have Simon who is also called Peter brought here."* Then this verse, this is key, *"And he shall speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household."* Now that's very important. He spoke to Cornelius words by which he would be saved, which means that as he is speaking here, Cornelius is not saved. He is still under the wrath of God. He is still under the impartial judgment of God who will condemn him to hell for his sin. He is yet to be saved. And yet please notice verse 35, *"In every nation, the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him."*

Would you please notice that fearing God and doing what is right is not necessarily equal to salvation. It does put an individual in a position to be welcomed by God. It is a pre-salvation condition, believe me, effected by the power of God and the work of the Spirit but it is a pre-salvation condition. Here is a description of Cornelius. He was a man who feared God and did right.

You say, "Can an unregenerate person be like that?" Yes according to *Romans chapter 1*, let me explain. According to *Romans chapter 1*, men are without excuse if they do not have a right reverence for God. Paul in *Romans chapter 1* puts it as simply as he can. He says this, *"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against men who suppress the truth."* Why? *"Because that which is known about God is evident within them for God made it evident to them."* How? *"Since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes, His eternal power, His divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made so that they are without excuse."* And the next verse says, *"They had better honor God and give Him thanks."*

What is this? This is describing what theologians call general revelation. That is to say that every one of us has a mind and with that mind or human reason we can ascertain that God exists. It's a matter of cause and effect. You look at the created world and it tells you there is a mind. You look at the character of this world, it's full of beauty, it's full of intelligence, it's full of love, it's full of power. There's so many things about God that you can see in the created order. You can see the tender petal of a flower. You can see the massive thunder of a...of a hurricane sweeping waves and crushing a city. All of those expressions of God from the earthquake to the beautiful sunset and everything else simply tell us something about the nature of the Creator. He is powerful. He is intelligent. He is wise. He loves beauty. He loves variety. So much can be learned.

And Cornelius had lived up to that light. He had responded to the created order to the reasoning of his mind that for every cause...for every effect there is a cause and when he saw the greatest effect, which was the world around him, it took him back to a first cause who must be God. Here was a man then who had reverence for the Creator, reverence for the one who had created not only the mountains but personality, not only the beauty of the created order but the tenderness and the kindness that comes through and the compassion made visible in this world through human life and family. He could learn much about God.

In fact, if he didn't acknowledge God he would be inexcusably blind and under the wrath of God. So it is true that an unregenerate person not only can but must fear God, have a wholesome, healthy fear of the powerful

Creator. Secondly, not only did Cornelius fear God but he did what was right. As much as was in him possible he followed the second revelation that God has built into every individual...not only reason which leads you back to the God who is the Creator...but the law of God, *Romans 2* says God has written His law in every heart and though men have not all the written, they have the law written in their heart which is activated by their conscience.

What was Cornelius? He was a pagan. He was a Gentile, without the Scriptures, without any background, but he understood God from the creation around him and he understood law from the law written in his heart. And so he feared the God who created everything. He feared the God who obviously was behind this created universe. And he acknowledged what was right and wrong according to the law written in his heart and attempted to live by it. We would call him a God-fearing Gentile who saw it as much was humanly possible to do what was right.

Back in chapter 10 and verse 2 it describes Cornelius as a devout man and one who feared God with all his household and gave many alms to the Jewish people and even prayed to God continually. Here is a man who is really seeking God, having been prompted by the Spirit. He had a right attitude toward God, an attitude of reverence. He had a right attitude toward moral law. And he sought to do what was right. In fact, he is the kind of man described in *Romans chapter 2* as a man who though not having the law does instinctively the things of the law.

Here is a man who is a pagan living up to the light he has. People ask the question: what about the people who never hear the gospel? What about the people who are outside the influences of Christianity? How are they ever going to come? Like Cornelius, if they live up to the light that they have and reverence the God of creation, and endeavor to live according to the law written in their hearts, activated to them by their conscience, then God will respond to that as He responded to Cornelius...if need be by sending a preacher to preach the gospel. In every nation there are people like Cornelius who fear God and endeavor to do what is right and they are welcomed by God.

But how do they get there? That takes us to the third component...one, God is an impartial judge; two, God welcomes sinners; three, He seeks to make peace with them. Verse 36, "*The word which He sent to the sons of Israel preaching peace through Jesus Christ."* It wouldn't be enough just to have the general revelation, it wouldn't be enough to just be where Cornelius was, you would still perish because your sins had not been forgiven. And so, God sent the Word, first to the sons of Israel...the gospel preached first to Israel was the gospel of peace through Jesus Christ. What does that mean? That man who is the enemy of God, man who is under the judgment of God can make peace with God.

The Word here is God's revelation, the Word of the Lord, Scripture. And the message is there can be peace and that peace is through Jesus Christ, that's the good news. There is peace through Jesus Christ. You don't have to be under the hostile judgment of God, you don't have to be God's enemy. Scripture makes it very clear, by the way, that God is the enemy of unforgiven sinners, as unforgiven sinners are the enemies of God. There is hostility that is mutual and deadly but it is not necessary, peace can come. God's anger can be mitigated, turned to love, judgment can become blessing and that's why we preach the gospel because men are under judgment, because God welcomes sinners and makes peace with them. What a great message.

God is the judge of every man. He will judged impartially every man according to whether or not he or she lived according to perfect holiness. If once you ever sin, you are disqualified, He is your judge. But He welcomes those who fear Him, who seek to do what is right and He makes peace with them so that the hostility is over, enemies become sons and daughters, family.

That's what we were learning in *2 Corinthians chapter 5* in that great text where it says God who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, where it says God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. God reconciled with sinners, enemies who have become friends. In fact, we are ambassadors for Christ, Paul says, and we're begging folks to be reconciled to God. God is the only one who can initiate such a reconciliation and He has deemed it suitable to do that. God seeks to be reconciled to sinners.

He doesn't want to be your enemy, He wants to be your friend. He doesn't want to be your judge, He wants to be your master. He doesn't want to curse you, He wants to bless you. He doesn't want to give you hell, He wants to give you heaven...peace with God, that's the message. What a glorious message it is.

So much for the "why," let's turn to the "who." Who makes this possible? It says it in verse 36, *"Through Jesus Christ."* Who is He? Just in case you might ask, He is Lord of all, He is not a Jewish comedian, He is not a mystic, He is not a political insurrectionist, He is Lord of all. And to call Him anything less than that is blasphemous. He is Lord of all. He is God of very God. So Peter clearly indicates the Who of salvation. Who can accomplish this if all of us have fallen short, if all of us are in sin, if there's no way that we can be reconciled to God on our own and yet God wants us, how can it happen, who is going to make the reconciliation possible? And the answer is Jesus Christ.

And then Peter launches into a very simple description of who He is. And the search, frankly, for the historical Jesus can end right here. You yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea. You know the story of Jesus...he's saying. You know because you live in the land of Israel, even though you're Romans. The story has circulated, it's been the talk of everything for the last three years, you know how it all started in Galilee and how there was the baptism which John proclaimed, you remember there was a man named John the Baptist and he came preaching a baptism of repentance, he was the forerunner of the Savior, preparing the way with his baptism of repentance, calling out a people who wanted to get ready for the coming of Messiah, his baptism was a sign of an inward repentance of people turning from sin to be ready for the Messiah. You remember John, started there in verse 38, *"And you know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power."* And by the way, that symbolically took place at His baptism when He was being baptized by John. And the Father said, "*This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, listen to Him."* And the Spirit descended like a dove and He was anointed for ministry and then John said, *"I must decrease while He increases."* And the spotlight went from John to Jesus and God anointed Him with power with the Holy Spirit, those are synonymous. And, of course, *Luke 4* tells us that He was anointed to preach the gospel to the poor and all of that. Jesus anointed by God.

Here is the real Jesus. There's no need for some supposed search. He is Lord of all. What does that tell you? He is God. He is God who came into human form, was born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, anointed with power, went about, verse 38 says, doing good and healing who were oppressed by the devil. It shows us there not only the goodness of God but the power of God over the kingdom of darkness. There's no need to wonder who Jesus was. He was Lord of all. He came into the world, He did good everywhere He went and He healed all who were oppressed by the devil, showing His power over the kingdom of darkness, over Satan who holds all sinners captive. Here is the real Jesus.

Fools who suppose in their wisdom to recreate a Jesus of their own making so they can continue in sin without fear of retribution cannot create Jesus. They cannot make Him in their own image. They cannot assault the Scripture without a severe blasphemy which is not only foolish but dangerous. Jesus was Lord of all, fully God. He was from Nazareth, fully man. And He came into this world to show us what God was like. He showed us the goodness of God when He did good. He showed us the power of God when He destroyed the kingdom of darkness by curing demonically created diseases as well as casting out demons, as well as defeating Satan.

Verse 38 closes by saying, "*For God was with Him...God was with Him."* This is not an ordinary individual. This is the Lord of all, God in human flesh with power and compassion radiated from God Himself. He says to Cornelius and his household...You all know this, common information. And then in verse 39, *"And we are witnesses of all the things He did, both in the land of the Jews throughout the whole land, and particularly in Jerusalem."* We saw it all. We have seen it all the way along...we being the Apostles, particularly. This is just a verifiable comment to the information in verse 38. We have seen it all.

And then he climaxes it in verse 39, *"And they also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross."* Cornelius knew that. He was a Roman soldier, of course he knew that. The night, as I pointed out Friday, that the soldiers came in the garden to take Jesus there were 600 of them. That was a major movement of troops in the city of Jerusalem, Cornelius would have been aware of that since he was a centurion, he would have been ranking enough to have heard, if not directly, indirectly, what was going on. He knew the Romans were involved in the execution of crucifixion...the Jews couldn't do it. He knew that Jesus had been executed by the Romans at the behest of the Jews. He knew that. In fact, Peter here lays the blame upon the Jews, the land of the Jews and they also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross... the Romans actually did it but it was the will of the Jews. He indicts Israel for murdering the Lord Jesus. Even Pilate said, "*I find no fault in this Man, what evil has He done?"* But they wanted Him dead and finally blackmailed Pilate into doing it.

For a while the people hailed Him. The Monday before, which we call Psalm Sunday, actually on a Monday, *John 12* describes Him coming into Jerusalem and the palm branches were thrown at His feet and they hailed Him as king and said, "*Hosanna, Hosanna*," which means "Save now, Save now, conquer the Romans, set up Your throne, let's have the Kingdom." By Friday they killed Him. Fickle crowd.

And all of those facts are known. There is nothing in history to indicate that Jesus' body was eaten by dogs at the foot of the cross. The history is absolutely clear. Peter doesn't have to elaborate. All he says to him is, "*You yourselves know the things that took place.* You know the story. It's common knowledge to believers and unbelievers. *And we've been witnesses of it, that He was put to death by hanging Him on a cross."*

And then verse 40, *"But God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He should become visible."* God overruled the verdict of men. And here is the common denominator again in all the apostolic preaching, the resurrection. He was raised up by God on the third day and became visible...physical, literal, bodily resurrection. He was manifest, He was visible. A dead Christ results in dead men, cut off from the life of God.

In *1 Corinthians 15,* listen to *verse 17. "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless."* Every time I read these liberals I want to ask them if they've ever read that verse. If you have a dead Christ, why are you involved in theology? Your faith is worthless. Why do you believe in Christianity if you have a dead Christ? Your faith is worthless, the rest of the verse says, *"Because you are still in your sins."* You see, if Christ stayed dead, then He did not make a satisfactory atonement for our sin. And if He didn't make a satisfactory atonement for our sins, then we are still in our sin. If Christ isn't raised, then our faith is worthless. What are these liberals believing...in a dead Christ whose body was eaten by dogs? What for? If there is no Savior, why be religious, why study theology, why have any Jesus at all? What's the point?

The whole of Christianity is absolutely pointless and meaningless because we're all still in our sin. And all those who have fallen asleep in Christ in the past are in hell *because if we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are, of all men, most to be pitied.* Listen, you can pity a person who believes only in a human Jesus, that's pitiful. If Christ doesn't rise, there is no Christian faith, the whole thing is useless and all faith in Jesus is pitiful, pointless.

But He did rise. The clear testimony of Scripture...God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He should become visible, verse 41, not to all people. Why not? Wouldn't it have been interesting if He had showed up in Pilate's bedroom? Don't you think that would be interesting? Wouldn't that have stimulated a conversation? Or better yet, Caiaphas' bedroom or Annas, or at the next meeting of the Sanhedrin. That would have been an interesting discussion. Why not? Why doesn't He show up there?

It says in verse 41, *"God made Him visible not to all the people but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God,"* that is to us, Do you know that after the resurrection Jesus was seen by over 500 people over a period of 40 days, but only His own people? Why? I think Jesus said it in *Luke 16:31. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, they will not believe though one be raised from the dead,"* remember that? It might have been a curiosity, but that's all it would have been. It might have produced in

Pilate terrible fear. It might have produced in Caiaphas and Annas terror, but that's all it would have produced. Because if they wouldn't believe the Scripture, they couldn't be saved. They would find another way to explain it away. And this is one pearl God won't cast before swine. He appears only to His own, to strengthen them, to confirm the resurrection so they can preach the resurrection.

"He appears...verse 41...visibly to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead." They sat down at table, proof positive, a real, literal resurrection. No phantom here, no hallucination here. We were eyewitnesses. We saw Him, we ate with Him, we drank with Him, we talked with Him.

And then verse 42, *"He ordered us to preach to the people."* He showed Himself to us, told us to preach to the people. Why? Because faith comes by hearing the Word. If they won't believe the Word, they wouldn't believe though someone was raised. They don't today. The evidence is overwhelming. Over 500 eyewitnesses over a period of 40 days, that would stand up in any court. And still these who call themselves scholarly who have all of this information right at their disposal who pour over the words of Scripture and miss the whole simple point of it, you mean to tell me if they will not believe the Scripture they would believe because they saw something? No. I'm going to show My own and they're going to preach the gospel and salvation will come by hearing the message about Christ.

Verse 42, *"He ordered us to preach to the people and solemnly*...that is with great seriousness...*solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead."* You preach, Jesus said to them, go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature...you tell them that the Christ that was crucified has risen and is now their judge. According to *John chapter 5* He's going to judge every individual...all judgment has been committed to Him by the Father. He is the criterion, He is the standard for judgment. He will judge every man. So you tell those sinners that the One who was crucified and the One who rose again is their judge. They're not His judge. They don't render a verdict on Him, He renders one on them. You tell them that. That's a warning part of the gospel. That's the fear part of the gospel that this Jesus whom you killed is now alive. He's ascended to the Father. He is now your judge and the judge of everyone living and dead.

Those are the facts and that's the who of the gospel. The Lord of all came into the world in the form of Jesus of Nazareth. Was anointed by the Holy Spirit with power. Went about doing good, healing all who were oppressed by the devil. He was put to death by being placed on a cross. God raised Him the third day. We saw Him for over 40 days. He went back into glory. He sits at the right hand of God. He is now the judge of all the living and the dead. And He will carry out the impartial just judgment of God who will damn everyone who falls short of His law. Christ goes from being Savior to being judge and executioner. That's the facts. That's the Who. And the gospel is about Him.

That brings us to the last point...the why, the Who, finally the how. If I want to participate in the resurrection gospel, if I want to come to the knowledge of the truth, what do I do?

Verse 43, "*Of Him all the prophets bear witness,"* all the prophets, you can sweep back through the whole Old Testament, they all bear witness of Him. And here's what they all say, *"That through His name everyone who believes in Him receives*...what?...*forgiveness of sin."* You see, there's only one escape from the judge. You're guilty, I'm guilty, and we're all guilty because we all come short of the standard. There's only one escape and that is if the judge will forgive us. We need forgiveness for our sins.

And you say, "How do we receive it?" *"Through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."* The only hope to escape hell, the only hope to escape the judge and His impartial divine judgment is to have your sin forgiven. The Old Testament prophets spoke about this. *Isaiah said He shall bear their iniquities. Jeremiah said, "I will forgive their iniquities and remember their sin no more." Zechariah said, "In that day there shall be a fountain open to the house of David and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for cleansing." Micah said, "Who is a pardoning God like You who gives grace?"* The prophets predicted that one would come who would forgive sin. And that one came and died,

paid the penalty for your sin and consequently your sins having been paid for, for God can forgive. Somebody else took your place.

What does it take? It says simply in verse 43, *"Everyone who believes in Him."* Believes in Him in what sense? Believes in that which is revealed about Him, that He is God incarnate, came into the world, did good, was filled with the Holy Spirit and power. He showed His power over Satan. Died on a cross and rose again, ascended to heaven, sits at the right hand of the Father. If you believe in Him and trust Him as your Savior, He forgives your sins...no longer your judge.

If you say, "I'd like to believe, I'm struggling." Pray the prayer the man in the New Testament prayed, *"Lord, I believe, help my unbelief."* By the way, Cornelius and his whole household believed that day two thousand years ago. How about you?

Newsweek came near to the conclusion of its article on Jesus and the resurrection with this statement, and I quote: "After 150 years of scholarly search there are signs that the quest for the historical Jesus has reached a dead end." Hardly... The historical Jesus reached a living end and because He lives we can live also and escape hell with our sins forgiven. The only thing that sends sinners to hell is their sins and God says I'll forgive them if you'll believe in Jesus Christ. What a gift.

I'll tell you one thing, if you miss the real Jesus and His salvation, life will be a dead end. Let's pray. Father, we thank You for again this reminder of the gospel, the good news, the truth about Jesus. Oh how wicked men who have been seduced by Satan want to prevent the truth from having its implications in their life. How foolish to thus become prisoners to judgment. There's no question about the historical Jesus that Scripture doesn't answer. Hundreds and hundreds of years and the prophets were writing about Him and then He came and then He lived and the record stands...Lord of all He became Jesus of Nazareth, went around doing good and healing, conquering Satan, died on a cross, rose again, ascended to heaven, has become the judge, but eagerly forgives all who believe in Him...takes away their sin and for a sentence in hell they're given an inheritance in heaven. This is the good news for which we thank You and may we believe it and proclaim it in our Savior's glorious name. Amen.