The Power of the Resurrection

Selected Scriptures - John MacArthur

This morning we come now to our time to examine the Word of God. Obviously, on a day like today, we step aside from our study of the Book of Ephesians to dwell upon the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ...Easter...is an international event. All around the world, no matter where you go, you'll run into the celebration of Easter. In San Diego, for example, this morning, 500 descendants of the Aztec Indians on horseback greeted the dawn with a special Indian song...In Belgium, people will be busily hiding their loved ones shoes and then demanding witty forfeits for their return. The Bavarians will be chasing each other around a pole. In Poland and Hungary and Czechoslovakia, young people will slosh water on village girls. In Austria, people will cut brush wood and encourage the revelers to whack each other on the shoulders to wish them good luck. In Ireland, it'll be the day of the biggest horserace of the year, with the most money bet. Outside the cathedral in Florence, Italy, the people will set ablaze an oxcart full of fireworks. Scandinavians will bring out their special seasonal Easter beer. In Rio, the hangovers from carnival are beginning at last to clear the heads. And in America, people will eat rabbits, candy, and eggs, and wear their spring clothes, and play with their kids.

That's the way it is at Easter around the world. Bewildering mixture of ancient faith and folklore of Christianity and paganism, of holiness and horseplay. Because Easter is a syncretism of the Jewish Passover, the Christian celebration of the resurrection of Christ, and pagan rites of fertility and spring. In fact, the term Easter is not a Christian term at all. It is the name of the ancient Anglo-Saxon goddess of light, Estre, and you might be interested to know that Easter celebrations predate Christianity. So that the resurrection of Christ has come lately to be one of the themes of Easter; and, by the way, there were other ancient Easter rites predating Christianity that were attached to the worship of the sun...and the worship of certain gods of fertility; and that's where the Easter egg came from. The egg is both, in ancient times, a symbol of fertility and a symbol of the sun because, of course, of the color of the yolk; and so eggs were used in ancient fertility rites as symbols offered to the gods and goddesses, and they were used in worship of the sun as sort of small emblems of the sun...Even the hot cross buns, which we saw quite frequently in Scotland, are not really Christian. That's only a late jump from paganism to Christianity for hot cross buns. Originally, they were used in the celebrations of Astarte, the Phoenician goddess of fertility.

I wondered this week how the rabbits got into the scene...since rabbits really have nothing to do with eggs...and so I checked out some resources, and I found that in ancient Egypt, the rabbit is the symbol of birth, for obvious reasons if you've ever had rabbits...and the Egyptians used the rabbit as a symbol of birth, and also other ancient people considered rabbits the symbol of the moon; and since rabbits in Egyptian society were symbols of fertility and birth, and they were connected with spring when things came alive. Since rabbits were the symbol of the moon and the date of Easter is annually determined upon the course of the moon, the connection is obvious there, too. So by virtue of the symbol of fertility and the symbol of the moon, rabbits have found their way into the celebration of Easter before Christianity ever came.

And then there is a more modern story in German about a poor woman living in a time of famine who had managed to get some eggs for her hungry children; and in order to make it special, she hid them on Easter, and, as the children discovered them in a bush, at the same moment, a rabbit jumped out of the bush; and the legend began that the rabbit had brought the eggs to feed the hungry children in the famine; and so the Easter Bunny was born. And so goes the mishmash of Easter. Rabbits, eggs, hats, dresses, new suits, fertility rites, spring celebrations, pagan festivals, special beer, new clothes, horse races, throwing water on each other, whacking people with shrubs, and on and on; and somewhere in the middle of all of that, Jesus rose from the dead. That's my reaction, exactly.

While we laugh at that, we aren't laughing at the resurrection. We're laughing at the silliness of the world. But it really isn't funny, because it's another one of Satan's efforts to muddle the issue. If I just do one thing this morning, I'd like to separate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the stupidity of Easter.

Spurgeon said this, "To set apart an Easter Sunday for special memory of the resurrection is a human device for which there's no scriptural command; but to make every Lord's day a resurrection Sunday is due to Him who rose early on the first day of the week. We gather together on the first rather than the seventh day of the week because redemption is a greater work than Creation and more worthy of commemoration; and because the rest which followed Creation is far outdone by that which ensues upon the completion of redemption. Like the apostles, we meet on the first day of the week and pray that Jesus may stand in our midst and say to us, "Peace be unto you." Our Lord has lifted the Sabbath from the old and rusted hinges whereon the law had placed it long before and set it on the new golden hinges which His own love has fashioned. He has placed our rest day, not at the end of the week of toil, but at the beginning of the week which remains as the rest for the people of God. Every first day of every week, we should meditate on the rising of the Lord Jesus Christ and seek to enter into fellowship with Him in that risen life.

Don't be fooled. The world doesn't pay any homage to Jesus Christ, but we must; because the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the cornerstone of all Christian truth. It is the thing upon which our eternal destiny hinges. Spurgeon said, "Upon a life I did not live, upon a death I did not die, I rest my eternity." And may I add, the resurrection is the why. The first sermon ever preached in the church of Jesus Christ when it was born on the day of Pentecost was a resurrection sermon; and, as you follow the life of the church through the *Book of Acts*, the resurrection is the theme. In chapter 2, Peter preaches resurrection. In chapter 4, he preaches it again. In chapter 10, he preaches it again. In chapter 7, Stephen preaches the resurrection. In chapter 8, Philip preaches the resurrection. In chapter 9, 13, and so forth, on through 28, Paul preaches the resurrection; and then you enter into the epistles, and the theme is always the resurrection.

In *Romans, Christ is raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father*. In *1 Corinthians, He rose again the third day according to the Scripture*. In *2 Corinthians, "He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also."* In *Galatians, "By Jesus Christ in God the Father who raised Him from the dead."* In *Ephesians, "He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead."* In *Philippians, "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection."* In *Colossians, it is God who raised Him from the dead.* In *Thessalonians, "His Son, whom He raised from the dead."* In *1 Peter,* Peter says, *"He has begotten us to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*." And the last book of the New Testament echoes the theme of the resurrection as Christ Himself initiates the book in the great statement, *"I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. I am He that was dead and am alive forevermore, and have the keys of hell and death."* So it is from the resurrection to the close of the New Testament, the theme is always that He rose from the dead. We must not be fooled by Satan's efforts to hide the resurrection in the foolishness of the world... Now, I prayed about what I should say to you today about resurrection, and I decided I was not an adequate preacher to preach the resurrection, and so I want us to study the sermon of another far better than I.

Acts chapter 2, the first resurrection sermon ever preached, preached by the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost. That's our sermon for today...Jesus has died...and risen from the dead. Over 500 people have seen Him, and then after 40 days of appearances to those people, He has ascended back to Heaven. Having returned to Heaven, He sends the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit comes with a sound like a mighty rushing wind. He baptizes and fills the believing community. They move out into the city of Jerusalem, literally teaming with thousands upon thousands of people gathered for the feast of Pentecost, and they begin to speak the wonderful works of God. Only they speak in all of the languages of all of the people, languages they themselves do not know; and such an incredible phenomena draws a multitude of thousands of people together to see what this thing is. How is it they can speak this way? What is the sound of a rushing mighty wind? What are these cloven tongues like fire? What is going on?

And as the crowd comes together, the Apostle Peter stands to preach, and he preaches what must become the theme for all preaching throughout all ages - the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He has three major points, like any good preacher. First, the reality of the resurrection. Second, the results of the resurrection, and, thirdly, the response to the resurrection. Let's hear his first point - the reality of the resurrection.

Verse 22, *"Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know - Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death."* You can stop right there. That's Peter's first point. His introduction was earlier on, and we don't have time to look at it, in which he showed how what they had seen that day was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy beginning to come to pass. And then he moves right into the message on the resurrection; and he establishes the reality of Christ's resurrection.

That's where it has to begin, people. It doesn't do any good to preach about what the resurrection means unless you believe there was one. It doesn't do any good to discuss how it affects you unless you believe it happened; and so, people, we must affirm that; and that's exactly what the apostle does. There are always people who deny the resurrection. They denied it in Jesus' time. In fact, they even paid the soldiers to lie about it. It was so obvious He rose from the dead that the word would've spread around, so they were bribed to lie. That's how willful their unbelief was; and even though, as Eric Sauer says, "We today live between two Easters: The Easter when Christ arose and the Easter when we rise." Even though the whole age is resurrection, people still deny it. They denied it then. They deny it now, and so Peter affirms that it happened in real, actual history.

Theologians and skeptics, as well as common men have denied the resurrection. Some have said, "Well, He never rose because He really never died. He just went into a semi-coma, and the coolness of the tomb and the spices revived Him." Some have said, "Well, He didn't really rise, but His Spirit lives on in the hearts of those who believed"; and some have said the disciples believed so hard, they hallucinated the resurrection, and they saw nothing but a figment of their own imagination." And some supposedly erudite theologians have said, "Yes, He did rise, but He rose not in normal history, not in human history, but in spiritual history beyond space and time."

And Peter disallows all of that garbage totally. He focuses on the historicity of the resurrection. Let's notice how he does it. Verse 22, *"Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus...of Nazareth, a Man."* Stop right there. He identified Jesus the way they knew Jesus. From Nazareth, a Man. They couldn't deny that. They had affirmed it. In fact, when Jesus died, they put it on the cross, "*Jesus of Nazareth*." Then they put, *"The King of the Jews."* Why? It was sarcasm, a common, human, ordinary man named Jesus from a low, despicable, nowhere, nondescript town called Nazareth. The king of the Jews? What a laugh...and so their own term of derision, which was as human and mundane and earthy a title as they could give Him, Peter throws in their face to reaffirm the actual historicity of Jesus Christ.

He was a Man. He was not a phantom. He was not an influence. He was not some kind of floating spirit. He was a Man. A Man with a human name from a real town. In fact, He was the least of men, a carpenter, a poor man who owned nothing; and so the very title by which they mock Him in His humanness becomes the affirmation that He is human to support Peter's point of the reality of the resurrection.

Peter went further than that, though. Verse 22, he said, *"Approved by God among you through signs or miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you."* In other words, he says, "Look, He was a Man. You know it. You saw Him. You heard Him. You touched Him. You knew Him, but He was more than that...because God put His stamp of approval on Him." By the way, that term "approved" is used apadegmaneeis used to refer to someone who is placed in the position of an office. It's thus used in *2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 4* for one illustration. And so what he's saying is, "God took that Man and placed Him in the Messianic office, affirming that He was the Messiah by miracles and wonders and signs." Those are three words to say the same thing. The miracle describes what He did. The wonder described the reaction, and the sign describes what it pointed to. He did supernatural deeds, which made them marvel and pointed to the fact that He was the Messiah. In other words, Peter is saying, "You know this individual. You know all about Him. You saw the display of His life.

It was manifest before you constantly. This is a real person from a real place who lived in a real world, your world, and you real people knew Him."...

At the end of verse 22, he says, *"As you yourselves also know."* Now what he's trying to do here is just identify the historicity of Jesus Christ. He really lived, and they really knew He lived. In verse 23, they not only saw Him, but they were involved in His life. The middle of verse 23, it says, *"You have taken Him and, by wicked hands, have crucified and slain Him. You not only were eyewitnesses. You were executioners.*" Here is a real man from a real place who lived a real life in front of you real people who died a real death which you were really involved in." This is history.

In verse 24 it talks about the agony of death. He went through a real death with real pain, and they knew it. Peter affirms His life, His death as real history, true history; and that's his point. He establishes the historical fact of Jesus Christ, His life, His miracles, and His death; and then he goes one step further at the beginning of verse 24. "*Whom God hath raised up."* That is just as historical. That's his point. Listen, Jesus was a creature of history, but he was never a victim of history. Verse 23 says, *"He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God."* They knew Him as a real person. They acted upon Him in a real execution. They made Him die a real death. He was, in every sense, a creature of history, yet never a victim of history. It was all the divine plan; and it ended in His resurrection. Just as real as He was, as real as Nazareth was, as real as His life was, as real as His miracles were, as real as their eyewitnesses' account proved Him to be, as real as His pain was, as real as His death was, so real was His resurrection. Really happened. It really happened.

You don't hear the writers of the Bible argue about the resurrection. They affirm it. It is history. Over 500 eyewitnesses saw it. For example, in *Acts*, you hear the Apostle Paul, and he speaks to Festus who is a very highly regarded, intelligent man in a very official position, and he doesn't give him a whole great big argument about it. Paul says to him, *"Christ suffered and was the first to rise from the dead."* Period. He affirmed it, and he got no argument, either. Paul didn't argue the resurrection. He simply affirmed it. He didn't try to prove it philosophically. He affirmed that Jesus rose from the dead because there were eyewitnesses. He didn't say it was probable. He didn't say it was possible, and he didn't even say it was plausible. He said it happened, and the proof is two saw Him, 11 saw Him, and 500 saw Him.

In *1 Corinthians chapter 15*, the Apostle Paul affirms this when he says, *"He was buried. He rose again the third day. He was seen by Peter, one of the 12, then 500 brethren, then He was seen by James, then by all the apostles, and last of all, He was seen by Me.*" And so Peter and Paul and all the other Bible writers, listen to this, deal with the resurrection the way commonsense people deal with any other fact of human history. He quoted his authorities. Eyewitnesses affirmed it was so, and his eyewitnesses in the case of the apostles and the 500 brethren were the best of men, the most honest and the most true who dared to go to prison, who dared to die as martyrs, who had absolutely nothing to gain and everything to lose, and yet affirmed the resurrection of Jesus Christ without flinching. So says Peter.

Jesus is a real person who lived a real life in a real place in front of real eyewitnesses who died a real death with real pain and came out of the grave with just as real a resurrection. History is the basis of the reality of the resurrection. It has never successfully been denied in 2,000 years; and then Peter moves from the reality of the resurrection to the results in verse 25. Well, 24, really. The results of the resurrection, the effects, what did it cause? Let me share with you four great truths that Peter gives as results of the resurrection. No. 1, death was conquered. Verse 24, *"God raised Him up. God loosed the agonies of death*...why?...*because it was not possible that He should be held by it."* There was a battle. It was death against Christ, and Christ won, death lost. Aren't you glad? Be awful if death won and Christ lost. You see, death couldn't hold Him. It was not possible. He conquered death...That's the glorious reality; and, by the way, beloved, that's Peter's first point, and it's for us. It's for us. He conquered death, but we may not need to die, but to enter into eternal life. Death couldn't hold Him. Death is a fearful thing. Everyone's afraid of death.

I read these words from a philosopher. He said, "My physician tells me I must die, and I feel that he tells me the truth. In my best hours, and in my worst, death has been perpetually upon my mind. It has covered me like a dread presence, weighed me down like an ocean, blinded me like a horrid vision, imprisoned my faculties as with bars and gates of iron. Often, and often when in saloons alive with mirth and splendor, I have seemed the gayest of the inmates. This thought and fear of death has shot through my mind, and I have turned away sick and shuddering. What is it then to approach the reality, to feel it very near, very close at hand, stealing on and on and on like the tide upon the shore, not to be driven back till it has engulfed its prey. What is it to apprehend the approach of the time when you must be a naked, guilty, trembling spirit, all memory and all consciousness, never again for a single moment to sleep or to know the oblivion from the crushing burden of the deeds done in the body...Oh, may well I smite upon my breast and cry with all but despair. Woe is me for the past. Woe, woe for the past. Every dream is dissolved, every refuge of lies is plucked from me. Every human consolation totters beneath me like a breaking wall, and all the kingdoms of the world, and all the glory of them couldn't bribe from my soul the remembrance of a single sin. Ambition, pleasure, fame, friendship lie around like wrecks. My soul is helpless in the midst of them like a mariner on his wave worn rock."... Terrible way to face death, isn't it?...James Shirley said, "The glories of our blood and state are shadows, not substantial things. There is no armor against fate. Death lays his icy hand on kings. Scepter and crown must tumble down, and in the dust be equal laid with poor, crooked scythe and spade. Kings and commoners. Death finds them all."

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote, "There's a keen and grim old huntsman on a horse as white as snow. Sometimes he's very swift, sometimes he's very slow. But he never is at fault, for he always hunts on view; and he rides without a halt after you. The huntsman name is death. His horse's name is time. He is coming. He is coming as I sit and write this rhyme. He is coming. He is coming as you read the rhyme I write. You can hear his hooves slow drumming day and night. You can hear the distant drumming as the clock goes tickatack, and the chiming of hours is the music of his pack. You can hardly note their growling underneath the noonday sun, but at night you hear them howling as they run. And they never check or falter, for they never miss their kill. Seasons change and systems alter, but the hunt is running still. Hark! The evening chime is playing. O'er the long gray dawn it peals. Don't you hear the death hound baying at your heels?"...

And I suppose he has articulated every man's fear. The average teenager thinks about death once every five minutes. Death. This is everyone's fear. The Canadian scientist G.B.Hardy asked of religion two questions. He said, "I just want to know two things. Did anybody every conquer death? Two, did he make a way for me to do it? And if there anybody...if there's anybody who ever did that, that's the one I will worship," and to his joy came the answer that Jesus Christ was dead and is alive for evermore. That's question No. 1, and that He said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." That's question No. 2.

Listen, do you know what it means that Jesus conquered death? It means that to die is only to begin a new life; that the grave is not a cul-de-sac, but a thoroughfare into eternal life; that the grave is not a going alone, but a going in the divine companionship with the Son of God; that the grave is not an ending, but a beginning; that the grave is not sorrow, but joy, because He lives, and because He lives, we can say, *"O, death, where is thy sting? O, grave, where is thy victory?" Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory in Christ Jesus.*

In *1 Corinthians chapter 15, in verse 12* and following, the Apostle Paul says, "What if there was no resurrection? What if there was none?" And then he lists seven disasters if there's no resurrection. *One, Christ is not risen. Two, the Gospel is useless. Three, faith is empty. Four, the apostles are liars. Five, sin's power is unbroken. Six, the dead are damned; and, seven, Christians are the world's most pitiful people;* and then he says, *"But now is Christ risen; and, because He lives, you shall live also."* What an incredible, glorious hope. And so said the hymn writer, "When He arose ascending high, He showed my feet the way. Up to the Lord my flesh shall fly at the great rising day." The first great result of the resurrection, says Peter, is death is conquered for us.

Second result, God's Word is validated. God's Word is validated. This is important to God. God says in the Old Testament, *"I have exalted My Word above all My name."* God lifts high His Word. God exalts His Word, and throughout Scripture, God seeks to validate the authority, the inerrancy, the absolute inspiration of the Bible; and He does it many ways, but no greater way than by prophesying. God gives a prophecy. Then we see it come to pass; and, thus, we conclude that God's Word is true; and, by the way, His record of accuracy is 100 percent. A.T. Pierson says, "There are over 1,000 prophesies in the Bible which God made, which already have come to pass and can be verified in history, and none that didn't come to pass as He said."

God speaks, and it is true. In *Isaiah 46:9 and 10*, God said, *"I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done."* God predicts future history, and every time a prophesy comes to pass, God's Word is vindicated and validated, and that's precisely what Peter says. Look at verse 25, *"For David speaks concerning Him,"* and immediately takes you back to *Psalm 16* where David made a prophesy. David speaks concerning Him. That Him is Christ, and what did David say? *"I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved."* David said the Messiah would come someday, and the Messiah would focus His attention on the Father and never take it off the Father; and, because of that, the Father would stand at His right hand, and nothing would ever come into His life that would move Him away from the plan of God. In other words, David prophesied the Father's protection and security of the Messiah and the Messiah's confidence in that. The Messiah would foresee the Lord always. That is, Christ would always have the Father in view; and He did, didn't He, though His whole life. And God would always stay at His right hand to be sure nothing ever went wrong; and so David says, "The Messiah will keep His focus on the Father, and the Father will keep the Messiah. Therefore, the Messiah's heart will rejoice. His tongue will be glad... and watch...His flesh will rest in hope. The Messiah will be willing to go to His grave, because He has hope that the Father will stand at His right hand. The Messiah will be willing to suffer and die for the joy that is set before Him. The Messiah being willing to endure anything," and the literal text at the end of verse 26 says, *"His body shall pitch its tent on the ground called hope,"* or why would the Messiah so trust the Father? Why would the Messiah be willing to rest His body in a grave? Why would He have the confidence of resurrection? Why would He know the Father would take Him through? Because that's what the Father said, verse 27, David again says, *"Because Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, neither wilt Thou allow Thine Holy One to see corruption."*

In other words, the Word of God said that the Messiah would rise from the dead, would be uncorrupted. His soul would never be left in the grave. He would rise from the death. Verse 28, *"Thou hast made known to Me the path of life."* In other words, Christ knew He would go into the grave, never corrupt, never remain, and come right out the other side in the path of life, and would enter into the full joy of the countenance of God, the end of verse 28. He would go right into the grave, right out the other side, and back face-to-face with the Father as he was before it all began. David prophesied the resurrection of the Messiah.

Now, some people might say, "Well, don't you think David's just predicting his own resurrection?" No, verse 29, *"Men and brethren...*Peter says...let me interpret this for you. You're having a problem? *David is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day.* This can't be David. David is still buried." That's his point. David wasn't talking about himself. He was talking about Messiah. Verse 30, "*Therefore, being a prophet*...David was a prophet...and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins...it wouldn't be David. It would be the Seed of David, the fruit of David's loins who is the Messiah. It would be He...according to the flesh who would be raised up to sit on his throne." God would raise up Christ to sit on David's throne. That was the prophecy.

Now, beloved, if Jesus didn't rise, God was wrong, and if God is wrong, then God is other than we believe Him to be, and we're in deep trouble...but God wasn't wrong. Verse 31, *"David, seeing this before, spoke of the resurrection of Christ that 'His soul was not left in Hades, neither His flesh did see corruption; and this Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses,'"* and we know He did it.

God's Word is validated. God's Word is vindicated. Do you see how important the resurrection is? For us, death is conquered. For God, His Word is validated.

There's another. For Christ, His person is exalted. Verse 33, *"Therefore, being by the right hand of God, exalted."* Stop right there. When Jesus came out of the grave...and finally ascended into Heaven, *Hebrews 1* says, "*God placed Him at His right hand." Philippians 2* says, *"God gave Him a name which is above every name. That at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in Heaven and earth and under the earth; and every tongue confess Jesus is Lord to the glory of God." Ephesians chapter 1,* the Apostle Paul writes, *"That when God had raised Jesus from the dead, He gave Him a place far above all principalities and powers and dominions."* Listen, Christ has been exalted, lifted up to sit at the right hand of God. He is the one to whom God has given the keys of hell and death. He is the one to whom the angels bow. He is the one to whom demons fall prostrate. He is the one to whom every creature in the universe will someday bow.

Verse 34, it couldn't be David. David isn't ascended into the heavens. But David said, *"The Lord said unto My Lord."* In other words, the Father said to the Son, *"Sit Thou on My right hand until I make Thy foes Thy footstool."* The promise was not to David, but to the Messiah. So Christ is exalted. Listen, beloved, if Jesus is still in the tomb, then Satan is still on the throne. The usurper won. Jesus did not do what *Hebrews 2:14* said He did, because *Hebrews 2:14 says that He destroyed him who had the power of the death."* But if He doesn't rise, Satan wins; and if Satan wins, we're damned. But, oh, bless God, He rose from the dead. God's Word was validated. Christ's person was exalted. Satan was defeated.

Second Timothy 1:10 says, *"Jesus Christ has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light."* So Peter says result No. 1, death is conquered for us. Result No. 2, God's Word is validated for Him. Result No. 3, the person of Jesus Christ is exalted. And, oh, He's so worthy of that exaltation. Out the other side of the grave to the glory of the Father. His enemies put Him to an ignominious death, but the Father delivered all things into His hands. His enemies spit on His face. Today He wears only majesty in His countenance. His enemies hated Him and refused His rule, but He lives to control every event of human history...

And then there was a fourth result. For us, death was conquered. For God, His Word was validated. For Christ, His person was exalted; and, finally, for the Holy Spirit, His work was commissioned. Verse 33, *"Being by the right hand of God, exalted, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."* Peter says, *"The Spirit has come, because Christ has risen."* Back in *John 7:39,* the Bible says that *the Spirit could not come, because Christ was not yet exalted.* As soon as Christ came through the grave and ascended to the Father, the Spirit was sent; and so the work of the Spirit depends on the resurrection. The exaltation of Jesus Christ depends on the resurrection. The truthfulness of Scripture depends on the resurrection. The victory over death that we experience depends on the resurrection. The resurrection is the keynote of all of time and eternity. If there is no resurrection, then you are dead in your sins and damned forever. God's Word is not true. Jesus Christ is the loser. Satan is the winner, and there is no Holy Spirit in the world.

But there is a resurrection, and so the results are complete. The resurrection of Christ conquered all...Someone wrote, "I heard two soldiers talking as they came down the hill. The somber hill of Calvary, bleak and black and still; and one said, 'The night is late. These thieves take long to die.' And one said, 'I'm very much afraid, and yet I don't know why.' I heard two women weeping as down the hill they came. The one was like a broken rose, and one was like a flame. One said, 'Men shall rue this deed their hands have done.' And one said only through her tears, 'My son, my son, my son.' But then I heard two angels singing, ere yet the dawn was bright; and they were clad in shining robes, robes and crowns of light; and one sang, 'Death is vanquished,' and one in golden voice sang, 'Love has conquered, conquered all, O Heaven and earth, rejoice.'"... And so Peter is in the rejoicing throng because of the results of the resurrection; and he concludes in verse 36, *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, through His resurrection, both Lord and Christ."* What a sermon,

and that brings us to the third and final point, just to mention it. The response to the resurrection. You might be sitting there saying, "John, I believe it happened. I believe in those results. Victory over death for us. God's Word vindicated. Christ's person exalted. The Holy Spirit commissioned," but it doesn't mean anything unless you respond, and how should you respond? Verse 37. *"When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart."* The word means to be pierced with an acute pain, and it implies not only acute pain but suddenness. They were stabbed. *"And they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'"*

Why did they say that? Why were they pierced? Three reasons. One, they knew they had killed their Messiah. No. 2, they knew He had risen from the dead. No. 3, they feared His vengeance. Very obvious. They were afraid. Listen, Jesus died...and He also rose, and He'll come back as a judge; and the Bible says He'll come back to judge every man, and He'll bring forth every man to life from the grave, the just and the unjust, the saved and the lost. Some to the resurrection of life, and some to the resurrection of damnation. He'll open every grave, and bring them to His throne; and some will enter into life, and some will enter into eternal death in hell. There was a king who so feared the judgment of God that, when he was buried, he said, "I demand to be buried in a granite slab so that I will not be brought forth for the final judgment." A little piece of dust lodged in a crack in that slab, and soon a bird dropped a seed there. Then a tree began to grow, and the roots found their way through the slab, and more dirt collected, and the tree grew a little more; and, finally, the tree grew to such a size that it shattered that granite slab. If a speck of dust and a little seed can do that, don't you know that the Lord Jesus Christ, the God of all Creation, can burst asunder every grave and bring every man to the judgment of God; and so it is that you will rise to life or death; and they were pierced in their hearts; and they cried, "*What shall we do?"* They had a deep sense of guilt over their rejection of Christ. They had a fear of divine wrath, and they were ready to do something about it.

Look at your own life. If you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, then you stand with the crucifiers; and the writer of *Hebrews* says you crucified the Son of God afresh. Do you sense the guilt of that? The guilt of sin because you believe not in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you fear His divine wrath? *"Any man who loves not the Son, let him be accursed."* Do you fear that? If you understand the depth of the sin of rejecting Christ, if you understand the fear of the wrath of God, and if your heart longs for victory over death, if you long for eternal life that only He can bring, then Peter says in verse 38, "*Repent of your sin and be baptized, every one of the you, in the name of Jesus Christ."* You see? Baptism is simply an outward symbol of an inward repentance; and, as you turn from your sin to Christ and believe in your heart, God washes your sin away; and you, as it were, enter into resurrection life. *Romans 10* says the most important thing that's ever been said to a human being. Verses 9 and 10, "*If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart of man believeth. With the mouth, confession is made unto salvation."* That's the most important message any person could ever have. If you believe God raised Him from the dead, and if you're willing to confess Him with your mouth as Lord, you'll be saved. You'll be forgiven for being a rejecter. You'll be granted the gift of eternal life, which He freely gives. Beloved, that's the message of resurrection. That's the truth of Easter. Not all the other stuff, and Easter will be meaningless apart from your believing that Jesus rose from the dead and confessing Him as Lord. Do you hear the cry in your heart? What shall we do? What shall we do? Repent and believe. Let's pray...

While your heads are bowed and your eyes closed for just moment, if you do not know Christ this morning, if you have not fully believed in your heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, you have not confessed Him as Lord and Savior of your life, right now where you sit, why don't you do that in your heart. If God's Spirit's speaking to you, open your heart toward God the Father, confess Jesus as Lord, believe that He rose from the dead for you, and enter into eternal life this very moment...Simple prayer in your heart and God will hear it and answer it, and you'll be born today. Father, we thank You for dying and rising for us. All these things for Your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.