Resurrection: The Key to Everything

Selected Scriptures - John MacArthur

It's always a wonderful challenge for me when I come to this particular Sunday in the year to know what the Lord would have me say after being here 23 past Easters and sharing so many things about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As I was meditating and seeking to know the mind of the Lord with regard to this Lord's Day, I asked a simple question in the process of my musings and that is the question: what would God the Father desire me to say about the resurrection? Not so much what would the people like to hear, not so much what would gather their attention and hold it, not so much what might be a nuance in regard to Easter that they've not thought about, but what would the Father want me to say? What simple straight-forward direct message could I bring that the Father Himself would want me to say concerning the resurrection of His Son?

Certainly many books and many articles and theses and dissertations have been written through the years on the resurrection. There have been many lectures and speeches and sermons and discussions on the resurrection. Most of it focuses on how to prove the resurrection. In fact, the books that have been written on proving the resurrection would fill a myriad of library shelves. And that's not unusual because often at this time of the year the question comes up: how can we prove the resurrection? If it is so central to Christian faith, how do we prove it? What is it that proves Jesus really rose from the dead?

Well the answer to that question is very simple...the Bible. And now that we've dealt with that question I want to move to another question. I don't want to talk about how we prove the resurrection, the Bible proves the resurrection. It is the Word of God and it says Jesus Christ rose from the dead and that settles it. The issue, frankly, is not what proves the resurrection, the issue is what does the resurrection prove? And the answer is, basically, the full redemptive plan and purpose of God. In fact, the resurrection is the key to everything.

If you remove the resurrection of Jesus Christ from Christianity, you don't have Christianity. You literally take the heart out of it. We accept that the resurrection happened by faith, faith in the Scripture, faith that is given to us by the Holy Spirit. We have been convinced by the Holy Spirit that the Bible is true and the Bible says Jesus arose from the dead and that settles that issue. And on the pages of Scripture there is ample convincing evidence.

But the question is, what did the resurrection of Jesus Christ mean? What did it verify? What did it accomplish? What did it prove? Well I want us to look at several realities that are proven by the resurrection, several that are made incontrovertible and inarguable by the resurrection. And I think you'll find them very basic to the message of Scripture.

First of all, the resurrection proves the truthfulness of the Word of God. That's really reversing the normal approach. We might say, "Well, the Word of God proves the resurrection." But let's look at it in reverse and see how the resurrection proves the Word of God.

Turn in your Bible to *Acts chapter 2*. *Acts chapter 2* takes us to a great day in the history of the church, its first day, the day the church was born, the day of Pentecost. The believers had been filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and now Peter stands up to preach a great sermon, the hearing of which caused 3,000 people to be saved and the church was born.

But as he moves in to his sermon he quotes an Old Testament passage starting in verse 25 of *Acts 2*. He is speaking about Christ and His death in verse 23, speaks of His resurrection in verse 24 when he says, *"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."* So he is saying Jesus arose from the dead, death couldn't hold Him.

And then he goes on to quote from *Psalm 16, "For David says of Him, I was always beholding the Lord in my presence for He is at my right hand that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exalted, moreover my flesh also will abide in hope because Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades nor allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life. Thou wilt make me full of gladness with Thy presence."*

He is quoting David. David was the author of *Psalm 16.* And David was writing this. Now some might say, "Well David was writing it about himself." But that's not true because David's soul did go in to Hades and David's body did undergo decay and David, the man that he was in a physical body has not returned to the ways of life. So it could not refer to David.

Notice how Peter interprets it then in verse 29, *"Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried and his tomb is with us to this day."* In other words, Peter is saying, "Now David couldn't be referring to himself David has been abandoned, as it were, to death. He is still in the abode of the dead. His tomb is still present, still known to the people...they even knew its location...David has not returned to the ways of life. So he could not be referring to David."

Verse 30, *"And so because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants upon his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay."*

In other words, he says David was prophesizing as a prophet the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was Jesus Christ whose flesh would abide in hope, whose soul would not be abandoned in Hades and who as the Holy One would never undergo decay. It was Jesus Christ who would be given back the path of life and would come back full of gladness face-to-face into the presence of God. David didn't fulfill that. His tomb is still sealed over there near Siloam. But David was a prophet and David was predicting the resurrection of Messiah.

To sum up Peter's argument, his logic would go like this. *Psalm 16* refers to someone being resurrected. It can't be David. Messiah was to come as David's greater son, out of David's loins. The Psalm refers to Messiah...Messiah will therefore be raised from the dead. And then he concludes in verse 32, *"This Jesus God raised up again."*

The Old Testament then in *Psalm 16* predicts the resurrection of the Messiah. If the Messiah doesn't rise. If Jesus Christ doesn't rise from the grave, the Bible is not telling us the truth. But the resurrection of Christ proves that the Bible speaks truth.

What does the resurrection prove then? The truthfulness of the Word of God. Look at *Acts chapter 13* and here we find the preacher, not Peter this time but Paul, and Paul in apostolic fashion consistent with Peter is also preaching the resurrection which, of course, was the heart of the Christian faith. And in *Acts chapter 13*, now I want you to notice verse 30, verse 29, of course, talking about the cross and Jesus being laid in a tomb, and then Paul says as he proclaims Christ to Jews, verse 30, *"But God raised Him from the dead and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people, and we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers."* There it is. We're preaching the resurrection. It is good news. We are witnesses to it. And it is that which was promised to the fathers, the Jewish fathers, the Old Testament saints.

Verse 33, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus as it is also written in the second Psalm, "*Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee."* And he is saying when the psalmist said that he was predicting that Jesus would be raised from the dead.

Verse 34, *and as for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no more to return to decay, He has spoken in this way, "I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David."* That is a prophecy from *Isaiah 55 and verse 3* which promises that the Messiah will not perish but the Messiah will inherit the holy and sure blessings promised to David that is all the Kingdom promise.

And then he says, therefore he also says in another *Psalm* and goes back to the same *Psalm 16* that we saw earlier, "*Thou wilt not allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay*." For David after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation fell asleep and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay. But He whom God raised did not undergo decay." And again you see, here is Paul and based on three Old Testament prophecies he preaches the resurrection of Christ. The Scripture is at stake. If Jesus doesn't rise, *Psalm 2* is wrong, *Psalm 16* is wrong, *Isaiah 55* is wrong, any other Old Testament passage indicating the resurrection of Jesus Christ is wrong, therefore the Bible cannot be trusted. It is not always true. Who then can discern when it is and when it isn't? And man is left with a hopelessly skewed confusing inadequate and inaccurate document in the Scriptures. But if Jesus rises from the dead, the prophecies are true, the Word of God is confirmed as speaking truth.

In *Acts chapter 26 we read, verse 22, "And so having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the prophets and Moses said was going to take place."* And what did the prophets say and what did Moses say even back in the Pentateuch? *"That the Christ was to suffer and that means of His resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."* All the way back in the law, all the way back in the prophets as well as the hagiographa, the holy writings, the *Psalms*, we see it in the law, the prophets and the writings, the Messiah will die and the Messiah will rise. The Scripture is at stake. When Jesus arose then all of these prophecies and many more were fulfilled and the Word of God was proven to be true.

Now I want you to turn to the *second chapter of John's gospel, John chapter 2, and verse 19*. Here our Lord Jesus is speaking, speaking to the Jews who are asking Him about a sign. Jesus answered and said to them, You want a sign? I'll give you one. *"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."* That is a prophecy, that is Scripture spoken by Christ recorded in the *gospel of John.* The Jews in their ignorance said, *"It took 46 years to build this temple,"* they think He's talking about the physical temple of Herod, "*and You will raise it up in three days? But He was speaking of the temple of His body."* Then verse 22, *"When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this and they believed the Scripture and the Word which Jesus had spoken."* They knew the Scripture promised a resurrection. They knew Jesus in speaking New Testament Scripture promised a resurrection. And when it happened, they believed the Scripture. The resurrection of Jesus Christ should affirm our faith and confidence in the veracity, the inerrancy of Scripture.

What does the resurrection prove? It proves that the Scripture is true. In *Luke chapter 24*, a familiar scene on the road to Emmaus as two woe-begone and saddened and grieving disciples walk along thinking their Lord has perished for good, not knowing of His resurrection. They are sad, all is lost. And as Jesus comes alongside in *verse 25 of Luke 24* He says to them, *"O foolish men and slow of heart, to believe in all that the prophets have spoken, was it not necessary for the Christ, the Messiah, to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."*

The picture of a dead and risen Messiah is all over the Old Testament. Every time there was a sacrifice of a lamb, every time such sacrifices noted in the Scripture, it speaks of a dying Messiah. But every time it talks about Messiah's reigning and ruling and kingdom, it speaks about a living Messiah, therefore it is obvious that the One who dies must come back to life. It is all over the Old Testament. And the Scripture's veracity is at stake in the resurrection.

In *1 Corinthians chapter 15*, you remember these wonderful words, *"I delivered to you*...verse 3... *of first importance what I received that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that He was buried and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,"* just as the Old Testament said He would be...just as He Himself said and the New Testament writers said He would be.

Secondly, the resurrection not only proves the truthfulness of the Word of God, it proves the deity of the Son of God...the deity of the Son of God. In fact, no greater proof exists for the divine nature of Jesus Christ

then His rising from the dead. That is the most monumental thing that He did to verify that He was God, for only God can give life, only God can conquer death.

If you look in to the New Testament you will find a myriad of individuals giving testimony to Christ as God. Some are most amazing, others we might expect. For example, demons affirm the deity of Christ. In *Mark 5 and 6...chapter 5 verse 6 and 7*, I should say...the demons said, *"Jesus, Son of the Most High God,"* even the demons, even the minions of hell, the fallen angels know of His deity, they know He is the Son of the Most High God.

In *John chapter 9* you meet a man born blind, a man whom Jesus healed, a man who was sick for the glory of God. And Jesus says to him, *"Do you believe in the Son of Man? And he answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him? And Jesus said you've seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you. And he said, Lord, I believe and he worshiped Him."* He knew he was dealing with God. The rest of the people said, "*We don't know where He's from." And the blind man said, "You mean He's opened my eyes and you don't know where He's from?"*

And then there were the disciples who gave testimony. Peter on behalf of all of them said, *"Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God."* Thomas said, *"My Lord and my God."* Nathaniel said, *"Thou art the Son of God."* Matthew said, *"He is God with us."* Mark said, *"He is Jesus Christ, the Son of God."* Luke said, *"He is the Son of God."* The Apostles, the writers of the New Testament, affirm the deity of Christ. There was John the Baptist, you'll remember, His cousin who said, *"I saw and bear record that this is the Son of God."* There was Martha the sister of Mary who said, very affirmingly, *"I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world," John 11:27*. There was the testimony of a Roman soldier at His crucifixion, "*Truly this man is the Son of God."* And Christ repeatedly made such claims. He said, *"If you've seen Me you've seen the Father. I and the Father are one."*

You have the testimony of all of these individuals to the deity of Christ. But none of them is as potent as the testimony of one other individual. Look at *Romans chapter 1 and verse 4*. In verse 1 we are introduced to the phrase, *"The gospel of God," Romans 1:1*. Verse 2 says, *"God promised it through the prophets." Verse 3* says, *"It was the gospel of God concerning God's Son."* Then *verse 4* says, *"It was the gospel of God concerning His Son who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead."* At His baptism *the Father spoke out of heaven and said, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him."* And that was a strong word from God at His baptism. But an even stronger word from God was that God raised Him from the dead and God was in essence saying...This is My beloved Son and He is proven to be My Son in that He has been raised from the dead, now for sure and for every reason listen to Him.

Romans 1:4 is the testimony of God the Father. He is the supreme witness. In *Acts 13:30* it says, "*God raised Him from the dead."* And God did it to give testimony to His deity. In *Romans 6:4* it tells us as well that *Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father.* The Father wanted Him raised from the dead so through His glory or His power, His attributes, His essence, He raised Christ from the dead. *Ephesians chapter 1 verse 19* talks about the surpassing greatness of God's power. How great is it? Verse 20, *"It is the power with which He brought about the resurrection of Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand."*

Again, God is the one who raised Christ. And He did it to give testimony to His deity. He has become in His resurrection both Lord and Christ. *The resurrection*, Peter says in *Acts 2:36, shows Him to be Lord and Christ.*

So, the resurrection not only proves that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, but it proves that He was God. *Romans 4:25* may be the most wonderful, the most powerful verse with regard to the application of His resurrection...makes a third point, and I want you to get this third point. The first point, His resurrection proves the truthfulness of the Word of God. The second point, His resurrection proves the deity of the Son of God. Thirdly, His resurrection proves the completion of the salvation of God.

Listen to *Romans 4*, wonderful truth, truth on which we build our lives. *"He was delivered up because of our transgressions and was raised because of our justification."* In order for God to justify us, in order for God to declare us righteous, He had to raise Jesus from the dead. When it says *His name shall be called Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins,* that's exactly what God wanted. But in order to accomplish it, He had to raise Christ from the dead. That was indispensable evidence of the completion and efficacious (successful) value of His death. It was the Father's way of saying...Your death accomplished its intended purpose. It was God raising Him from the dead to affirm that what He did on the cross satisfied God's holy justice. If He didn't rise, then all He is- is Jesus Christ Superstar and His death is the death of an ordinary man and has no saving value. But He did rise from the dead and He was raised by the Father for our justification. He was raised in order that in the sight of God we might be made righteous, in order that in the sight of God we might be without sin, in order that our sin might be dismissed and forgiven. And when He was raised it was as if God said...I accept the sacrifice...I accept it.

There are so many essential features in our salvation contingent on the resurrection. I can take *Romans 4:25* and split it into component parts. The bestowing of eternal life is dependent on the resurrection. *As in Adam all died, so in Christ shall be made alive. Because I live you shall live also.* In other words, it was in the death of Christ and His resurrection that He granted to us eternal life. If He never rose then He showed He couldn't conquer death. If He never rose He wouldn't be alive. If He wasn't alive He couldn't give us life. But He did arise and He said in *John 11:25*, *"I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in Me even though he dies shall live again."*

So, eternal life is dependent upon the resurrection. That's a component in the completion of God's salvation. Secondly, the sending of the Holy Spirit. If Jesus hadn't risen from the grave He never would have ascended back to the Father. If He hadn't ascended back to the Father, He never would have sent the Holy Spirit. He Himself said that He could not send the Holy Spirit until He had gone back to the Father, *John 16:7*, *"I tell you truth, it is to your advantage that I go away. If I do not go away the Holy Spirit will not come to you. But if I go, I'll send Him to you. And when He comes He'll convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment."* When He comes He'll lead you into all truth. When He comes He'll bring all things into remembrance. When He comes He will place you into the body of Christ. When He comes He will become the guarantee of your eternal life. When He comes He will take up residence in you and you will become His temple. When He comes He will empower you for service. When He comes He will guide you. When He comes He will instruct you in the Word of God. He will be the anointing that teaches you so that you need no human teacher.

The whole full-blown ministry of the Holy Spirit was dependent upon the resurrection of Christ. If He didn't rise He couldn't ascend. If He couldn't ascend, He couldn't send the Spirit. No resurrection--no ascension... no ascension--no Holy Spirit...no Holy Spirit--no church. When you talk about the resurrection proving the completion of the saving work of God, you're talking about the heart of Christianity. He had to rise to give us eternal life. He had to have the life to give it. He had to rise to go back to the Father to send us the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, He had to rise to forgive our sins. If He hadn't risen from the dead then we would know the Father was not pleased with His sacrifice, His sacrifice was not efficacious, it was not successful, it didn't work, it didn't atone for our sins and therefore the Father did not exalt Him and take Him to glory because He didn't do what He was supposed to do. On the other hand, if Jesus was raised from the dead, taken to the right hand of God, seated at the throne of God on His right hand, affirmed by God as having perfectly accomplished our redemption, then there is forgiveness of sins. Then it is accomplished. Then He who came for the expressed purpose of dying to put away death and sin accomplished His purpose. *He*, it says, *was made like His brethren in all things that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make propitiation for the sins of His people,* that's *Hebrews 2.* Later on it says in *Hebrews* that *He has perfected forever them that are sanctified by the offering of Himself,* that His sacrifice did work, our sins were completely covered and the Father affirmed it in the resurrection.

Fourthly, Jesus must rise from the dead in order to be at the right hand of God interceding for us. His resurrection is inseparably linked to His work of intercession as He presents His petitions on behalf of the weak and tempted Christians and intercedes for them before the throne of grace.

John says in *1 John 1...1 John 2:1 and 2*, we have an advocate with the Father who is always pleading our case. *Hebrews chapter 4* and *Hebrews chapter 7* says *we have a merciful and faithful high priest, in all points tempted like we are yet without sin, and He ever lives to make intercession for us.* He is always at the right hand of God. Satan is there accusing us. He is there defending us. He is our lawyer, our advocate, our defender. If He didn't rise from the dead He wouldn't have ascended. If He didn't ascend we have no defender there. We have no one there pleading our case. We don't have the Holy Spirit in us pleading our case with groanings which cannot be uttered because He couldn't go back and send the Spirit and we don't have Him there advocating on our behalf either. The resurrection therefore is necessary not only for forgiveness of sins but for perpetual intercession that we might never be tempted above that we are able and that there always will be a way of escape.

Fifthly, the resurrection is crucial to the bestowal of spiritual gifts. What are those? Those are the divine enabling abilities that the Spirit of God gives to every Christian so that we can serve God. In *Ephesians chapter 4* it says that *Christ ascended and after He ascended He gave some as apostles and some as prophets and evangelists and pastor/teachers for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service, for the building up of the body of Christ.* He went back to heaven and then He began to work through gifted men and spiritual gifts to build His church strong. To each one of us, verse 7 says, was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. And He gave us that gift when He ascended on high, when He led captivity a host of captives and gave gifts to men. Jesus, risen from the dead, ascends to heaven, sends back spiritual gifts, gifted men, so that we can serve God. That's all based on His resurrection. If He doesn't rise...arise, He doesn't ascend, He doesn't send gifts, nor the enabling Spirit.

Sixthly, the resurrection also grants spiritual power. Jesus said in *Matthew 28:18, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth."* Then in *Acts 1:8* He says, *"When the Spirit comes I'm passing it to you and you now are able to do exceeding, abundantly above all you can ask or think according to the power that works in you." You have the power, Ephesians 1* says, *that raised Jesus from the dead working through you.* Jesus Christ then sends us power, the enabling power and authority of the Spirit of God.

I can give you a seventh component of the salvation of God and that is Jesus Christ in His resurrection has given to us a new position of blessing. In *Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 3* it says "*we are blessed with all spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ."* Christ is in the heavenlies and because He is there He pours out all spiritual blessing on us. *Chapter 2 of Ephesians and verse 7* says, *"Forever He will pour out the surpassing riches of His grace in His kindness toward us."*

What immense blessing. The salvation of God demanded eternal life, the coming of the Spirit, the forgiveness of sins, ongoing intercession, the bestowing of spiritual gifts, the granting of spiritual power and the outpouring of eternal blessing...and all of that hinges on the resurrection. If Christ doesn't rise, none of it happens...none of it. The question then is not what proves the resurrection but what does the resurrection prove? It proves that the Word of God is true. It proves that the Son of God is deity. It proves that the salvation of God is complete.

Fourthly, the resurrection proves the establishment of the church of God. Our Lord said He would build His church. Do you remember these words in *Matthew 16?* We preached on them a few weeks ago. *"I will build My church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."* What are the gates of Hades? It's a Jewish expression meaning what? Death. I'll build My church and death won't stop it...not your death and not Mine. Jesus was, in effect, saying...I'm going to die but I'm going to rise...death is not going to stop Me from building My church. *Ephesians 1:20* says that "*Christ was raised from the dead, seated at the right hand in heavenly places, far above all rule, all authority, power, dominion, every name that is named not only in this age, in the age to come. And He's put all things into subjection under His feet and gave*

Him as head over all things to the church which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. When He rose He took His seat, He became the head of the church. The resurrection is essential to the establishment of the church. If there's no resurrection there's no church. Anybody that says they belong to a church that doesn't believe the resurrection doesn't belong to a church. The true church is the church of those who have been given life through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

John Calvin wrote, "This is the highest honor of the church that until He is united to us, the Son of God reckons Himself in some measure imperfect. Without consolation it is for us to learn that not until we are in His presence does He possess all His parts or does He wish to be regarded as complete." In other words, the Messiah Himself is not complete without His body. He is a head without a body, the church is His completion. And that church was born in the resurrection. It was the resurrection that transformed the apostles from scattered, fearful, faithless doubters and cowards into world changing apostles. The little band of disciples maligned and persecuted grew to fill Jerusalem with their teaching and soon turned the world upside down. Jews meeting on Sabbath for centuries and millennia all of a sudden became Christians meeting on Sunday. Sabbath was no more the day, Sunday was because Jesus arose. And the church has marched through time triumphant in the power of its risen Christ.

Bill Gaither wrote, "God has always had a people, many a foolish conqueror has made the mistake of thinking that because he has driven the church of Jesus Christ out of sight, he has stilled its voice and snuffed out its life. But God has always had a people. The powerful current of a rushing river is not diminished because it's forced to flow underground. The purest water is the stream that bursts crystal clear into the sunlight after it has fought its way through solid rock. There have been charlatans who like Simon the magician sought to barter on the open market that power which cannot be bought or sold. But God has always had a people. Men who could not be bought and women who are beyond purchase. God has always had a people. It has been misrepresented, His church, ridiculed, lauded and scorned, these followers of Jesus Christ have been escorted to the edge of the grace, accorded the whims of time, elevated as sacred leaders and martyred as heretics, yet through it all their marches on that powerful army of the meek, God's chosen people who could not be bought, murdered, martyred or stilled. On through the ages they marched, the church, God's church, triumphant, alive and well. And the church lives today despite constant attack and corruption and counterfeiting. It lives because it is sustained by resurrection power."

The resurrection then proves the truthfulness of the Word of God, the deity of the Son of God, the completion of the salvation of God, the establishment of the church of God. Fifthly and sadly, the resurrection proves the inevitability of the judgment of God...the inevitability of the judgment of God. When our Lord came into the world the first time, He was mocked and scorned, hated, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. He was humbled, He allowed Himself to be treated so terribly, the people said He was from hell. They battered Him, they spit on Him, they pushed a crown of thorns into His head, they drove nails through His hands and feet, they rammed a spear into His side, they put Him on display naked as a laughing stock.

But that's not the last scene the world will have of Jesus. He rose from the dead to be their judge. They executed Him as a criminal. He will come back as their judge. Listen to *John 8*, a very, very powerful, powerful testimony. He says to the Jews who have rejected Him, verse 26, *"I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you."* This thing isn't over, He said. Back in verse 21 He said, "*Because you do not know Me you will die in your sins and where I am going you cannot come."* I have more to say to you, He says, and to judge concerning you.

Back in *John chapter 5* He speaks specifically about that judgment. In verse 22 He says, *"All judgment is given to the Son, God has made Him judge and given to Him all judgment." Verse 21, "Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes and then not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son."* Down in verse 25, *"Truly, truly I say to you, an hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear shall live for just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son to have*

life in Himself and He gave Him authority to execute judgment." What kind of judgment? *Verse 28, "Someday the tombs are going to hear His voice, they're going to come forth, those who did good deeds to the resurrection of life, those who committed evil ones to a resurrection of judgment." I can do nothing on My own initiative...verse 30* says*...as I hear I judge and My judgment is just."* He's coming back as a just judge. He's coming back as judge, jury, sentencer, executioner. And God has testified to that. He was killed as a criminal. He will return as a resurrected judge.

Listen to *Acts 10 verse 42,* actually start at verse *40, "God raised Him up on the third day after being hanged on a cross...verse 39...God raised Him up on the third day...Acts 10 verse 40...and granted that He should become visible, not to all the people but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is to us who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead."* Why did He appear to the apostles? Verse 42, *"And He ordered us to preach to the people and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead."* He will come back as a God-appointed judge. In *Acts chapter 17* is preaching on the Areopagus known as Mars Hill in Athens and Paul says in verse 30 of that sermon that *God has patiently overlooked the times of man's ignorance but He is now declaring to men that they just repent...verse 31 of Acts 17...because He has fixed a day, the day of the Lord, which He will judge the world in righteousness through a man He has appointed.* And how did He furnish proof that Christ was the man? *By raising Him from the dead,* says Paul.

The resurrection then is the act of the Father by which He appoints Christ to be the judge. Now you can see how man's sweeping realities in the Christian faith are unlocked to us in the resurrection of Christ. He is raised not only for our justification who believe, but for the damnation of those who do not believe and the Father attested to Him as Savior, as Son and as judge by His resurrection from the dead. I'm thinking of *Romans 14:9* which says, *"Christ died and lived again that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living,"* and then the next verse says, "*We must all stand before the judgment seat of God."* He is not only the judge of the unbeliever, He is the judge of the believer. We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, Paul says in *2 Corinthians chapter 5, and He will be there to test our works to see if they're wood, hay and stubble or gold, silver and precious stones*.

The Lord Jesus Christ risen from the dead proves the truthfulness of the Word of God, the deity of the Son of God, the completion of the salvation of God, the establishment of the church of God, the inevitability of the judgment of God...and one last point, the eternal bliss of the people of God. His resurrection is the guarantee of our eternal heaven. Listen to these wonderful and familiar words, Jesus speaking, *John 14, "Let not your heart be troubled, believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places, if it were not so I would have told you for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, receive you to Myself that where I am there you may be also."*

Right there Jesus is predicting His resurrection. He's headed to death but He says, "I'm going right through death into the Father's house to get a place ready for you and I'll be back to get you." If there's no resurrection, there's no place prepared for us. If there's no place prepared for us, there's no heaven for us. Everything depends on the resurrection.

And again I say what I said at the beginning. The real issue is not: Can you prove the resurrection? The real issue is: What does the resurrection prove? You take out the resurrection and you have cut out the soul of the Christian faith and you have non-Christianity without the resurrection. All of God's complete redemptive plan depends on this key reality.

And that brings it right down to us, doesn't it? All of the redemptive plan of God in its fullness, completed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ will either mean to you heaven or it will mean to you hell. He will either be back to take you to the place that He has prepared for you, or He will be back to send you to the place He has prepared for the devil and his angels. He will be back either to gather you into His heaven, or to send you to the hell that is outside of His presence forever. He will be back to pour upon you eternal blessing or eternal punishment. You will arise from the dead someday to the resurrection of life

in His presence, to the resurrection of damnation out of His presence. All gospel realities hinge on His resurrection and your eternity is at stake. You can make your choice. It doesn't seem to me to be much of a choice, to choose heaven, forgiveness, blessedness, joy, fulfillment in His presence, or damnation, punishment, hell forever out of His presence. But that's the choice.

This is resurrection day, the day we celebrate the resurrection of Christ and the day we should celebrate your resurrection in Christ. Pray with me.

Our Father, as we bring this service to its conclusion, we're very much aware of the fact that this is not just a message, this is a command...*believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.* The gospel is a command. When the Father said, "*This is My beloved Son, listen to Him,"* that was a command. And either we obey it and respond in faith to Christ, give Him our lives, ask Him to save us from our sins and take us to heaven, or we reject it and disobey and are appointed place with the damned and the wicked. Father, I pray that Your Holy Spirit would work in every life, every heart, every mind so that no one can shirk this message, this truth. This is not just something that can be ignored, treated with indifference, eternal destiny turns on the issue of will I commit my life to the One who rose to be my Savior, or will I reject Him and face Him as my judge? Lord, I pray that all across this world today as the resurrection is being preached, heaven will be rejoicing because many will be turned from death to life, darkness to light, hell to heaven, despair to hope, sin to righteousness. Work Your work in every heart and for the glory of Christ we ask. Amen.