

The Resurrection of Christ

by William MacDonald

The resurrection of Christ is the keystone of the Christian faith, the greatest proof of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the fulfillment of a wonderful messianic prophecy.

Duration: 43:54

Scripture: Isaiah 61:3, Matthew 7:23, Matthew 25:21, John 20:27, Acts 17:30, 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

Topics: "Resurrection Of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by reviewing a chorus from the previous week called 'Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord.' The congregation sings the first verse of the chorus and practices it. The speaker then discusses how we will recognize Jesus by the marks of Calvary, such as the wounds on his hands, feet, side, and brow. He also mentions that Jesus will say 'well done, thou good and faithful servant' to those who are saved, but to those who are not saved, he will say 'I never knew you.' The speaker then references Acts 17:30, which talks about the philosophy of life if there is no afterlife, and emphasizes the importance of Jesus' resurrection for our justification. He gives an illustration of someone being sentenced to jail but being saved by someone else's intervention.

Transcript

Review our chorus from last week and then see if we can learn a new one this week. The one from last week was, Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord. And the fellows are passing out the chorus sheets to you now.

When we finish with them, just pass them into the center aisles. Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord. Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice.

Tender to me the promise of his word, and God my savior shall my heart rejoice. We just sing the first verse of it. Would you like to play it for us, Lita, please? Very good.

Try it. Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord. Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice.

Tender to me the promise of his word, and God my savior shall my heart rejoice. Try it again. Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord.

Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice. Tender to me the promise of his word, and God my savior shall my heart rejoice. Good.

Try the other one. He gave me beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise. The spirit of heaviness that we might be trees of righteousness.

The planting of the Lord that he might be glorified. Practically a direct quotation from Isaiah. He gave me beauty for ashes.

How does that go, Lita? Just notice on the first line that we might. Then there's a pause there, a rest there, that we might and then be trees of righteousness. Let's try it.

He gave me beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise. For the spirit of heaviness that we might be trees of righteousness. The planting of the Lord that he might be glorified.

Let's try it again. He gave me beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise. For the spirit of heaviness that we might be trees of righteousness.

The planting of the Lord that he might. I think if we sing it once more, you'll have it and be singing it all week. Ready? He gave me beauty for ashes.

If any of you like to keep these, incidentally, you're free to do it. Otherwise, just pass them in to the. I confess I had to wrestle with myself about the message for today.

As you know, we've been going through first Corinthians and we came up to chapter five, but we didn't finish it last week. And today, of course, people think in terms of the resurrection and all of this went back and forth. I was dueling with myself and finally I decided to compromise.

Stay in the same book, but speak about the resurrection. So let's turn to first Corinthians chapter 15 and let me read a portion there. First Corinthians chapter 15, beginning with verse one.

We'll read verses one through eight and then 12 through 19. Moreover, brethren, I declared to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved if you hold fast that word which I preached to you unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures, and that he was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.

After that, he was seen by over 500 brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, and some have fallen asleep. After that, he was seen by James, then by all the apostles, then last of all, he was seen by me also as by one born out of due time. Verse 12.

Now, if Christ be preached that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there's no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he did not raise up, if in fact the dead do not rise.

For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sin. Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished, if in this life only we have hope in Christ, whereof all men the most pitiable.

It's interesting how the world, when it gets hold of an observance like this, will extract Christ from the observance and put everything else in. When I was a boy back in Boston, Massachusetts, you'd hardly believe what Easter was. On Easter Sunday, all the blue bloods, all the wealthy people of Boston, the Lowells and the Cabots, would put on a parade on Commonwealth Avenue.

They would be dressed in their Easter finery, and they would walk along, and all the peasants would turn out to see them. I kid you not, that's exactly the way it was. It seems very remote.

No thought of Christ, no thought of the resurrection, just new clothes, just finery. It was an enormous display of the flesh. Just get Christ out of the observance.

Of course, it's that way today with Easter eggs and Easter bunnies and all that. In fact, if you listen to the news this morning, Easter in Rome this morning means the resurrection of democracy in Eastern Europe. Incredible, isn't it? But we come back to the wonderful story of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I'd like to say just a couple of words by way of introduction, which I think are helpful. They're helpful to me. When you read the word resurrection in the Bible, it always refers to the body.

It always refers to the literal raising of the body from the dead. It's not some spiritual, ethereal concept. It's a literal, tangible concept.

And that was the case with the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus' resurrection was the first case of real resurrection in the history of the world. I can think of some people who were raised from the dead in the Old Testament.

And Jesus raised people from the dead during his earthly ministry, didn't he? Son of the widow of Nain, Jairus' daughter, Lazarus. The Bible treats those things as more like resuscitation. It treats them like reanimation, but not as resurrection.

The Lord Jesus was the first case of resurrection in the history of the world. You say, why? Because, one, he rose never to die again. Those people who were raised from the dead died again.

Lazarus died again. The son of the widow of Nain died again. Jairus' daughter died again.

But the Lord Jesus rose never to die again. And that's very, very important for us to understand. And also, I want to emphasize, he rose in a glorified body.

It was, in a sense, the same body, but it was in a glorified condition. It was a body, for instance, that was no longer subject to death. Our bodies are subject to death.

That's why they're spoken of as mortal bodies, mortal bodies, subject to death. But the glorified body of the Lord Jesus was no longer subject to death. It couldn't die.

Not only that, it was a real, tangible body. He said, handle me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see me have. He said to Thomas, take your hand and put it into the spear wound in my side.

It was a real, tangible body. It was a body that could eat broiled fish and honeycomb, which he did in the presence of his disciples. It was a body that could come out of the tomb while the tomb was sealed.

And I tell you, that's a lot of stone, isn't it? Jesus didn't rise after the stone was rolled away from the mouth of the tomb. He rose before it was rolled away. It was still sealed by that Roman seal.

But there was something more powerful than a Roman seal, and that was the power of God that raised him from the dead. And he came out from that sealed tomb. And he entered a room when all was closed, entered a closed room.

Glorified body. And not only that, but he could disappear instantly. And yet it was a tangible body, a body you could feel, a real, literal body.

And yet, you know, that's not the important point that I want to leave with you today. But let me go on. Why is the resurrection important? Well, it's important because it is the keystone of the Christian faith.

Now, that might surprise you. When people think of the Christian faith, they think of Christ on the cross. Well, Christ on the cross is very, very important.

But I'll tell you, the Bible doesn't leave them there. All would have been failure if Christ had stayed on the cross. So we don't talk today about a Christ on a crucifix, do we? The Christ of the empty tomb and the Christ of the filled throne at the right hand of God today.

A man in the glorified, glorified man in the glory. The resurrection is the basic keystone doctrine of the Christian faith. First Corinthians 15, 14, we read, If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain.

That's how important it is. And mind you, if you read the book of Acts, you'll find that the great doctrine that they preached all through the book of Acts was the resurrection of Christ, a risen Savior. No one's afraid of a man nailed to a cross.

I mean, what a symbol of utter weakness. But in the book of Acts, the apostles told the people, Look, that one whom you took and by wicked hands you crucified and slain, God raised him from the dead and you're going to meet him someday. That was the message of the book of Acts.

It really was. So let us never forget that, that the resurrection of Christ is the keystone of the Christian faith. Mind you, the substitutionary death of Christ is important.

He did. He died as a substitute. He shed his blood for the remission of our sins.

But if it had stopped there, it would have been of no avail. Everything depended upon the Savior rising from the dead. Secondly, the resurrection of Christ is the greatest proof of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The greatest proof of the deity of the Lord Jesus. Jesus is God. You read that in Romans chapter one and verse four, where we read these words declared to be the son of God, according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

It says he's declared to be the son of God, according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead. I didn't say that. The Bible says it.

And it's absolutely true. Then thirdly, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was the fulfillment of a very wonderful messianic prophecy. Mind you, if he hadn't risen from the dead, prophecy would have been

useless.

Prophecy would have been an utter failure. But just turn back to Psalm 16 for a moment with me, and then we'll turn over to Acts chapter two. Psalm chapter 16 gives you the prophecy, and Acts chapter two tells you its fulfillment.

Psalm 16, verses 10 and 11. And here the Savior is speaking by inspiration. He says, You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will you suffer your Holy One to see corruption.

You will show me the path of life in your presence, as fullness of joy at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. You will not leave my soul in Sheol. What does that mean? It means you will not leave me in the disembodied state.

That's what it means. Sheol in the Old Testament referred to the disembodied state. Neither will you suffer your Holy One, that is, the body, to see corruption.

You won't allow my body to return to dust. It was a prophecy of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now turn to Acts chapter two and Peter's memorable sermon there, and we'll read in verses 24 through 31.

Acts chapter two, verse 21. I really, I really, let's see, it says verse 23. I'll just begin there.

Him being determined, being delivered by the determined counsel and for knowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified and put to death. Notice whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it. For David says concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken.

Therefore, my heart rejoiced and my tongue was glad. Moreover, my flesh will also rest in hope. Here it is, because you will not leave my soul in Hades, same as she all.

Now, will you allow your Holy One to see corruption? You have made known to me the path of life, the ways of life. You will make me full of joy in your presence. You see, the Jewish people of Peter's day, they figure, well, he was crucified in that place outside Jerusalem.

He had no posterity. That's the end of him. Peter said, don't you believe it for a minute? The one you took, the one you slew, the one you nailed to a cross of wood outside Jerusalem, God has raised him up in fulfillment of your Old Testament scriptures.

That's what he's saying to him here. And of course, it pricked their hearts and they were convicted of sin. And later they said, man, brethren, what should we do? It was easy to tell them then how to be saved, wasn't it? Easy to tell them how to be saved.

And not only was it the fulfillment of that prophecy, but it was a fulfillment of one of the Lord's own prophecies. You remember in John chapter two, he said, destroy this temple. And in three days, I will raise it again.

And he spoke of the temple of his body. What an astounding statement that was. Imagine some person in this room talking like that.

That would be the laugh of the day, wouldn't it? So I should stand before you and say, kill me. And in three days, I'll rise again from the dead. That's what the Lord Jesus said.

He said, destroy this temple in three days. I will raise it again. And that's exactly what happened.

And then I would suggest to you, number four, that the resurrection of Christ was the greatest of all miracles, the greatest of all. In a sense, the resurrection of Christ is all other miracles rolled into one. The resurrection of Christ, the dumb is able to speak.

The blind receives sight. The deaf ear gets hearing. Everything.

It's all bundled into one miracle. The greatest of all miracles. That's why I think when the Jews said, show us a sign after he had given them untold signs, miracles, they said, give us a miracle.

And he said, an evil and adulterous generation seeks after a miracle. But there's no miracle will be given. But the miracle of the prophet Jonah.

As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. What does he think about his own resurrection? That's what he was speaking about. It's wonderful.

Everything I've said to you is true. And yet it's not the main thing that I wanted to bring before you today. Fifth, the basis of our resurrection is the rest.

The basis of our justification is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The basis of our justification, those of us who are believers, is the resurrection of the Lord. They're very important.

Romans chapter four, verse 25 says he was delivered for our offenses and he was raised again for our justification. He was delivered up on account of our offenses. And he was raised again in order to procure our justification.

It was very important that he rise from that. Just think of this. If the Lord hadn't risen from the dead, his death would have been no different from anybody else's.

I mean, eventually everybody died sooner or later and will if the Lord doesn't come. And the body returns to dust there in the cemetery. If that had happened to the Lord Jesus, he's just another man like ourselves.

Isn't that what people would say? Nothing distinctive about that. But he was raised again in order to procure our justification. Let me illustrate it this way.

Supposing I ran into trouble with the law and I appear before the judge and he sentences me to three days in jail. And Tom comes to me and he says, I don't like to see you go to jail, Bill. You know, those jail cells aren't the most sanitized person places in the world.

And I'd like to go for you. And actually, you don't hear this happening, this sort of substitution that happened at Calvary. That doesn't happen today.

But supposing Tom went to jail for me and he served three days in that jail cell and I'm walking down a street on the fourth day and I see Tom walking on the other side of the street. What do I know? I know my penalty has been paid. I know my sentence has been fulfilled.

I know the law has nothing more to say to me on that score. Because a substitute has paid the penalty for me. Dear friends, when we see the Lord Jesus in resurrection, those of us who are believers, when we see him in resurrection, what do we know? We know the penalty for our sins has been paid.

We know God will never bring our sins up before us again for judgment, shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life. And I often think of this in connection with the Old Testament saints. You know, how are the Old Testament saints saved? They were saved by faith in the Lord.

They put their trust in the Lord on the basis of whatever revelation he gave them. If he spoke to them and they believed, he saved them. But he saved them on the basis of the still future work of Christ.

They were saved on credit, as it were. We're saved looking back to Calvary. They were saved looking forward.

They didn't see Calvary, but God saw it. And God put all the value of the work of Christ to their account. But listen, if Jesus hadn't risen from the dead, it was all in vain.

All of the faith of those Old Testament saints was for nothing. If Jesus hadn't risen from the dead, it was an awful lot depended upon that empty tomb. Well, that's first Easter morning, wasn't it? Not only our redemption, our justification, but the justification of all the Old Testament saints.

Six, the resurrection of Christ proves that there is life after death. I hear people cynically saying, well, nobody knows. Nobody's come back to tell us.

Well, somebody did come back to tell us. They forget the resurrection of Christ. And if his resurrection proves one thing, it proves that yes, there is life after death.

Very important to keep that in mind. And I think this is wonderful. Number seven, the resurrection of Christ is the pledge and the guarantee of the believer's resurrection.

First Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 20, it says, now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruit of them that sleep. And that's a wonderful thing to start. When you start to think about it, we lay the body of our loved ones in Christ away in the grave, not a very glorious moment, you know, whatever you want to say, moment of weakness.

But I tell you, the pledge is there that that same body will be raised in a glorified condition, condition just like the body of the Lord Jesus minus the wounds, the scars of Calvary. Just imagine that as far as we're concerned, there'll be nothing compared comparable to a wart, a birthmark, a scar, a pimple or anything else, a beautiful glorified body. Only Jesus will have the wounds of Calvary and he'll have them throughout eternity because the scripture speaks of him as the lamb freshly slain.

The lamb freshly slain, pretty marvelous. It's wonderful to think of the body that we will have no more subject to colds, arthritis or any other form of sickness and no longer subject to death. And the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is a guarantee that all of those who die in faith will be raised in that same kind of a body.

And it doesn't mean that we won't have our individuality in heaven. Of course we will. You will be recognized as you in heaven.

But we will be like him in the sense that we will be morally perfect and able to worship with unhindered worship. And none of the limitations that bind us now will bind us then. Wonderful.

It's enough to boggle the mind. And yet that's not the main point I wanted to bring before you. Number eight, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the proof that God was fully satisfied with the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross.

How do we know? How do we know that the claims of divine justice were fully met there at Calvary? How do we know that God could look down with favor and say, The Romans chapter 6 verse 4, it says that he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. Now that's a strange expression, isn't it? Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. Is that hard for you to take in? Well, it is hard.

Let me see if I can explain it this way. All the righteous attributes of God demanded that he raise Christ from the dead. God wouldn't have been right not to raise him from the dead.

Why? Because he was the sinless son of God. He never did anything that was worthy of death, but he took our sins upon him, and he bore them away by the sacrifice of himself. He went to the cross.

He went to the tomb. And now I say the attributes of God, his righteousness demand that he raise the Lord Jesus from the dead. That's what it means.

Raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. And I think that is absolutely wonderful. It's wonderful to know that God is satisfied.

And he gave us a wonderful token of his satisfaction by raising the Savior from that grave. And then nine, the resurrection of Christ is the basis of the gospel message to a dying world. It is.

It's the basis of the gospel message to a dying world. Mohammed, you can go to the tomb of Mohammed. Buddha, other religious leaders.

Well marked tomb. You can go and lay your wreath on the tomb. But not the tomb of Jesus.

Tomb of Jesus is empty. And in spite of all of the attempts of his enemies to explain away the resurrection, it stands an assured fact. One of the most, one of the best attested facts in all history.

Number 10. It means the doom of Satan. Hebrews chapter 2 verses 14 and 15.

Hebrews chapter 2 verses 14 and 15. In as much then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared in the same, that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death. That is the devil.

And release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. It's in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus that I see that Satan is a defeated foe. His power has been annulled.

It has been brought to nothing. And he knows that. And he knows that his time is short.

And that's all very true. Everything I've said to you is true. It is not only true, it's wonderful.

It's marvelous. It's glorious. And yet it isn't the main point I wanted to bring to you today.

Let me go on. This might come as a shock to some of you, but it's absolutely scriptural. Number 11.

If Christ didn't rise from the dead, then the proper philosophy of life would be, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die. And some of you are going to react against that. Say, oh no, I'd rather be a Christian anyway.

But Paul doesn't agree with him. Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and read verse 32. 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 32.

It says, if in the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me if the dead do not rise? Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die. What that is saying is, look friends, if this life is all there is, and if you die and your body goes to the grave, and they just close the lid of the coffin gently, that's the end. Then the proper philosophy of life would be, live life to the hilt now, and get as much enjoyment out of it as you can, because it's the only heaven you'll ever know.

And that's what Solomon found out in Ecclesiastes in his search for the meaning of life under the sun. That's the conclusion he came to. Because under the sun, he didn't have the assurance of resurrection.

You have to get above the sun to get that. So it really is true that if this life is all there is to it, no resurrection, just enjoy it while you can. Because that's all there is.

You know, everything I've said this morning, you can listen to it, and you might think, well that's just a theological discourse, and it's kind of intangible and vague and mystical, and what does it have to do with me and San Leandro in the 1990s, you know? That brings me to the main point that I want to make this morning. That every person sitting here this morning is going to meet the risen Savior someday. It may be shocking to you, it may be disturbing to you, but it's absolutely true.

He's not a dead Christ on the cross. He's a living Christ at God's right hand, and he's coming again. And everybody in the room this morning is going to meet him face to face and individually.

What do you think about that? Maybe you say, well how will I know him? No, there won't be any trouble knowing him. There won't be any trouble knowing him. Distinctive above all other persons who've ever lived.

And you'll know him by the marks of calvary in his hands, feet, and side, and on his brow, the marks of the crown of thorns. You'll know him. You say, well what will he say to me? Well, the Bible tells us that too, doesn't it? To those who are saved, undoubtedly he will say something like this, Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

Welcome to those who are not saved. He'll say, depart from being workers of iniquity. I never knew you.

Turn just with me to Acts chapter 17 and verse 30. Acts chapter 17, and remember this is a digest. This is a summary of the message that these apostles preached during the Acts period.

I'll go back to verse 29, Acts 17 and verse 29. Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. Truly, these times of ignorance, God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to what? Repent.

Why? Because he has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained. He's given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead. Now, if I were an

unsaved person this morning, that would really give me pause to know that the Christ of Calvary, the Christ of the empty tomb, I'm going to stand before him if I were unsaved, and all my life would be brought out before him.

Not only the deeds that I did, the things that I didn't do, but shouldn't have, and the thoughts and intents of my heart would be all exposed in that day. And I will be judged for that. It's not necessary because I could have gone off scot-free if I had only accepted him as my savior.

And so really the resurrection of Christ puts a decision before any who are still outside of Christ. There's a decision to be made. I remember a young man attending this fellowship, and he was being convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit of God.

And I said to him, do you know that you have a decision to make? And he said, yes, I know I have a decision to make. And praise God, he made that decision and trusted the sinner's savior. Dear friends, if you are unsaved, you need some new clothes this Easter.

Not clothes that you buy at Macy's or I-Magnon's or Capwell's. You have to go to Calvary for these. The righteousness of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

God made him to be sin for us who knew no sin. But we might be made the righteousness of God in him. You know, the scriptures are staggering.

You know what that verse says? It says that when you receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your savior, you're clothed in the righteousness of God. That's what makes you fit for heaven. Not for what you are in yourself, but because you're clothed in his righteousness.

Because you can look up into the face of God and say, oh God, I thank you that in Christ I'm as righteous as you are. That's true. Apart from that, we'd never, nobody would ever see heaven.

He has made him to be sin for us. He who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. The only way to heaven is through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The one who died as a substitute on the cross of Calvary. It was very who rose again the third day according to the scriptures. Maybe God, the Holy Spirit, is knocking on your heart store this morning.

I don't know. You know. And you know that there's a decision to be made.

You know that pride is keeping you from that decision. We would urge you today, give up. Surrender.

Say, nay, but I yield, I yield. I can hold out no more. I think by dying love compelled.

And own thee, conqueror. Be the greatest Easter of your life. Amen.

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