

# The Resurrection

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The horror of the crucifixion crushed any lingering hopes among the disciples that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah. Their despair was so powerful that they refused to believe the reports that Jesus had indeed risen from the grave. The reports of the women and the open tomb were suggestive, but it was too painful for them to get their hopes up again. Only the physical appearance of Jesus Himself and His rebuke about their refusal to believe finally convinced them that Jesus had indeed conquered the grave. The resurrection revived their faith in Him as their Messiah and gave them hope that they too would conquer the grave through Him. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the resurrection.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20–21

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To describe the significance of the Valley of Gehenna in Jewish thought.
2. To describe the reaction of the disciples to the resurrection of Jesus.
3. To discuss the appearance of Jesus on the road to Emmaus.

## QUOTATIONS

*Our Lord . . . deliberately staked his whole claim upon his resurrection. When asked for a sign, he repeatedly pointed to this sign as his single and sufficient credential*

*(John 2:19; Matt. 12:40). The earliest proclaimers of the gospel conceived witnessing to the resurrection of their Master as their primary function (Acts 1:22; 2: 32; 4:33; 10:41; 17:18). The lively hope and steadfast faith that sprang up within them they ascribed to its power (1 Peter 1:3; 1:21; 3:21). Paul's whole gospel was the gospel of the risen Savior.*

—B.B. Warfield

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The resurrection is part of the exaltation of Christ, but probably not the beginning.
  - The nadir of Christ's humiliation is His death on the cross.
- B. The bodies of most victims of crucifixion were tossed into the burning garbage heap outside the city.
  1. The Valley of Gehenna became associated in the Jewish mind with hell.
  2. Garbage was dumped at Gehenna every day and therefore it became a place where the worms did not die and the fires would not go out.
- C. The body of Jesus was not brought to Gehenna, but placed in the tomb of a rich man secured by Joseph of Arimathea.
  - Isaiah prophesied regarding Jesus' burial saying "and they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death" (Isa. 53:9a).
- D. The resurrection is a central feature of the exaltation of Christ.
- E. "But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus" (Luke 24:1–3).
  1. The belief in the resurrection does not rest simply on the idea that there was an empty tomb.
  2. The belief in the resurrection is based on eyewitness accounts recorded in the New Testament.
- F. "While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen'" (Luke 24:6a).
  - The announcement of Jesus' resurrection is one of the most dramatic in all of Scripture.

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- G. “Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.’ And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them” (Luke 24:6b–11).
1. People living in first-century Palestine were not naïve and superstitious simpletons.
  2. The disciples initially rejected the resurrection report of the women who went to the tomb.
- H. “But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened” (Luke 24:12).
- The disciples are nevertheless curious enough to investigate the reports of the women.
- I. “That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him” (Luke 24:13–16).
1. Jesus was not unrecognizable to these two disciples, but rather the Spirit of God withheld them from identifying Jesus.
  2. The hopes of the disciples were completely dashed on the day of the crucifixion.
  3. The grief of the disciples hindered their ability to recognize Jesus after His resurrection.
- J. “And he said to them, ‘What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?’ And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, ‘Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?’” (Luke 24:17–18).
- Cleopas is shocked at his fellow traveler’s apparent ignorance of recent events in Jerusalem.

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- K. “And he said to them, ‘What things?’ And they said to him, ‘Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel’” (Luke 24:19–21a).
- These disciples grieve because their expectations of a Messiah as a military hero have not been met.
- L. “Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see” (Luke 24:22–24).
- These disciples do not believe the report of the women because they did not see Jesus Himself.
- M. “And he said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:25–27).
- Jesus shows these two men how all of the law and Prophets spoke about His coming.
- N. “So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, ‘Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.’ So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight” (Luke 24:28–31).
- As the disciples shared a meal with Jesus their eyes were briefly opened and they recognized Him before He vanished in front of them.
- O. “They said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?’ And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, ‘The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!’ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you!’” (Luke 24:32–36).
1. Most moderns consider the resurrection of a dead man to be impossible.

2. Jesus bore the sins of others in His death and not His own.
3. The Scriptures declare that it was impossible for death to hold Jesus.
4. Death could not hold Jesus in the grave, and the Father could not conceal His sinless son in hell without raising Him to life again.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. Why is it so important to authentic Christian faith to believe that Jesus rose from the dead? Given that the disciples had been told by Jesus Himself who He was and what would happen to Him, why do you suppose the disciples were so slow to believe He had risen from the dead?
2. Examine the three supernatural appearances detailed in Luke 24:1–49 (the angels at the tomb, Jesus on the road to Emmaus, and Jesus in Jerusalem). What do the messages in each instance have in common? Are there any significant differences?
3. After Jesus' resurrection, the Jews spread a rumor that Jesus' body had been stolen and that the disciples had fabricated the resurrection story (see Matt. 28:11–15). What evidence in this passage refutes this rumor? In Luke's account, how many witnesses attested to the fact that Jesus' body had been stolen? How many witnesses attested to the fact that He had risen from the dead? How reliable were the witnesses?
4. How can Jesus claim all authority and power under heaven and earth after His resurrection (Matt. 28:18)? Why is this truth especially important as the disciples (and, by extension, the church) receive the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18–20?
5. What does it mean that Christ Jesus is “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25)?

## DISCUSSION

1. What is ironic about the despair of the men on the road to Emmaus? How does their despair indicate that they misunderstood much that Jesus had taught them? In what ways does your thinking reflect their own?
2. What are the strongest arguments you know against the bodily resurrection of Jesus? How do you respond?
3. According to Jesus, the Old Testament teaches about Him, even addressing His death and resurrection. As you read the Old Testament, do you look for these elements? What does Luke 24:45 suggest is necessary to properly understand the Scriptures? If you believe this verse, how would it change your approach to Bible Study?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Keener, Craig. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*

France, R.T. *The Gospel of Mark*

Stein, Robert H. *Luke*

Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John*