



RESURRECTION: GOD SAVES

Part 1 of Doctrine

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In this lecture, number nine, we're dealing with resurrection and how God saves. We looked at, in the previous lecture, how God died. How Jesus, the second member of the Trinity, died. And the issue of the resurrection is incredibly important. Christianity does not exist apart from the resurrection of Jesus.

Every time that the gospel is preached in the book of Acts, which is the book of the history and the telling of the early church, the resurrection of Jesus is proclaimed, almost on every page. First Corinthians 15:17 says it this way, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins." Bottom line is this, if Jesus is dead, so is our hope, that's the bottom line.

Some will want to reduce Jesus to a good moral teacher with good insights, but unless he rose from death, he's not a savior. He can't take us through death to the other side and give us any hope beyond the grave. So the resurrection of Jesus is the historical fact on which all of Christianity rests. If you remove that fact, Christianity crumbles, ceases to exist. There is no Christianity without a resurrected Christ. That's the big idea.

Now let me explain to you what resurrection is. It's three things: someone is physically alive, then dead for a while, and then physically alive again. This is not resuscitation, where you passed out, you were unconscious. Alive, dead for a while, like Lazarus, right? The King James says, "he stinketh," dead for a while, and then back to life.

Now, what is the biblical evidence for Jesus' resurrection? I'll give you eight lines of biblical evidence. I'll give you a cumulative case for the resurrection of Jesus. Number one: Jesus' resurrection was prophesied well in advance. Seven hundred years before Jesus was even born, in Isaiah 53, right around verses 8 through 12, it talks about how Jesus would depart from the land of the living, that he would die. It says that he would be buried with the rich in his death. It says these things clearly. And it says after the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied. He'll return after death, resurrection. He will justify many. He'll be the means of our salvation. So it was prophesied in advance. Jesus would die, be buried in a rich man's tomb and resurrect to save sinners.

Number two, Jesus repeatedly, emphatically, clearly said, "I will die, three days later I will rise." Let me give you some examples, Mark 8:31, Mark 9:31, and Mark 10:33-34. The gospels speak of this repeatedly, but in Mark 8, 9, and 10, there are just three examples near the end of each chapter where Jesus says, "I will die. I'll be dead for three days, and then I'll be back." And he says things like, "As Jonah was in the whale for three days, I'll be in the earth for three days and then I'll be back." So Jesus knew he was gonna rise from death.

Number three: Jesus actually died on the cross. Some religions teach that he didn't. Most Muslim scholars conclude that he swooned and did not die on the cross. I told you what happened to Jesus on the cross. I deal with it in further detail in my book *Death By Love*, but he most assuredly died. He was flogged. He was crucified. A spear was run through his heart, and his heart exploded. He's very dead. Then he was wrapped in upwards of a hundred pounds of burial linens and spices, think, quasi-mummy state. He's laid in a cold tomb without food, water, or medical attention for three days. He is really dead. You can't get any more dead than that.

Number four: Jesus' tomb was well known. Matthew 27 speaks of the fact that when Jesus died, he was poor, he didn't have a burial plot. There was, however, a quieter disciple, a man named Joseph of Arimathea, who was affluent and he was a member of a legal ruling body, so he was a prominent member of that city and town. And he gifted, postmortem, to Jesus, his own private burial chamber. This was in fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 52-53, where it says that he was buried with the rich in his death. So when Jesus was buried, some say, "Well, they thought he rose 'cause they didn't know where the tomb was, so they went to the wrong tomb." No, Joseph of Arimathea was alive, well-known man, gave Jesus his tomb, and Jesus was buried in his tomb. It was very easy to find Jesus' tomb. In fact, the women who went to mourn knew exactly where to go according to the biblical record.

Number five: three days later, Jesus appeared resurrected from life. He was resurrected to life from death. He came back. He appears, 1 Corinthians 15 says, over the course of forty days to crowds upwards of five hundred people at a time. He appears as well to men like Thomas, who is the great doubter. Thomas said, "Well, I heard Jesus is alive, but I won't believe it 'til I see with my own eyes." Jesus shows up. Thomas sees the scars in his hands. He falls down and rightly says, "My Lord and my God." Jesus appeared to small groups, large groups, evening, daytime, morning, enemies, friends, families, acquaintances, strangers. Some have said, "Oh, they had a hallucination." Five hundred people at a time for forty days? That's quite a hallucination. Usually a hallucination is a private experience. If it's a public experience, we call it a fact, not a hallucination. It'd be like saying sixty thousand of us went to the football game and we all watched it. It was an amazing hallucination. No, it was an event, and you all witnessed it.

Number six: the record of Jesus' resurrection was recorded shortly after the fact. 1 Corinthians 15 is regarded to be the shortest summation of the gospel in the New Testament. It says that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, that three days later he rose in fulfillment of the Scriptures, that he appeared to crowds upwards of five hundred, he appeared to others as well, and Paul says, "He appeared also to me." This was recorded within a few years, written down after Jesus' resurrection. There wasn't significant time for myth, legend, fable, or folklore to come in. This was not invented, this was recorded.

Number seven: Jesus' own family worshiped him as God. His mother was among the early church worshiping him as God. As a devout Jew, she would have known, if you worship anyone other than the real God, you're violating the first and second commandments and you're damned and going to hell. Jesus' own two brothers, James and Jude, worshiped him as God, went on to be pastors, and penned books of the New Testament bearing their names. My question to you would be: what would it take for your brothers and your mom to worship you as Lord, God, Savior, and Christ? Probably something bigger for you than a resurrection. For Jesus, it took the resurrection. I don't know about you, I've got two brothers. They have never called me God. They've called me a lot of things I won't repeat. "God" is never what they have called me.

Number eight: Paul worshiped Jesus Christ as God. He hated Christians. We first meet him in the Book of Acts where he is overseeing the murder of the early church deacon, Stephen. This guy murders Christians, and he ends up worshiping Jesus, why? Because he saw Jesus risen from death. There is no way you account for Saul becoming Paul, a murderer of Christians to himself a Christian and a pastor of Christians, apart from the resurrection of Jesus.

Circumstantial evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. The disciples were changed from cowards that were hiding to martyrs who died for their faith. The followers remained loyal to Jesus. Usually when people are committed to someone, if they fail, the loyalty goes away. For example, if a political leader runs for office and they lose, ten years later, one hundred years later, two millennia later, there's not a lot of people really devoted to the cause, right? How many of you came today wearing your Michael Dukakis button? You say who? That would illustrate my point.

Additionally, the disciples' character is not that which is consistent with a liar. They don't lie. These are men who gave up their jobs and their lives to serve others and to do good. To just call them liars is to deny the goodness of their character.

Additionally, Jews had, for millennia, since the days of the giving of the Ten Commandments, been worshiping on Saturday. That was their holy Sabbath, and they started worshiping on Sunday because that was the day of Jesus' resurrection. They would not have made this change had they not seen Jesus risen from death, realizing that a new era in human history had dawned. The reason why Christians worship on Sunday as opposed to Saturday is because that's the day of Jesus' resurrection. It doesn't make any sense for Jews to start worshiping on Sunday apart from the resurrection.

Also, Jesus is worshiped as God. He's worshiped as God. Jews wouldn't start worshiping Jesus as God unless they had the resurrection as evidence.

Also, the sacraments of baptism and communion. Baptism shows us that Jesus died for our sins, was buried and rose, so Christians get baptized to identify themselves with the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus in their place for their sins. Communion is about the broken body and shed blood that went into the tomb and came back. So the sacraments are ultimately about Jesus' death, burial, resurrection.

Additionally, the Bible says that the first witnesses to the empty tomb were women. In that culture, women were in a second-class status. They oftentimes couldn't, for example, open a bank account, own property, vote, or testify in court. If the Bible were lying about the resurrection of Jesus, men would have been presented as the eyewitnesses, not women. Doesn't make any sense for that very important fact to be there unless it's just the truth.

In addition, the tomb was not enshrined. Once someone dies, we tend to visit their grave, leave flowers. If they're very important, a musician, a political leader, someone who is dearly loved, people will enshrine their burial location, meaning you go there and there are candles, gifts, flowers, pictures, poems, mourners. That didn't happen at Jesus' grave. There is no historical evidence that people went to Jesus' grave to mourn because they didn't need to, they could just go hang out with him.

And lastly, Christianity exists. You don't get something as big as Christianity—A few billion people on the earth today worship Jesus Christ as God. Christianity's the biggest religion in the history of the world. Jesus is worshiped by more people than anyone in the history of the world. We mark our calendars around Jesus, BC, before Christ, AD, *anno Domini*, the year of our Lord. Our major holidays are around Jesus. And people from all languages and tribes and nations and colors and tongues and backgrounds worship Jesus as God. And to have an effect that big, you need a cause as big as the resurrection of Jesus.

Taken all together, the cumulative case evidence is Jesus died, was buried, and rose. Additionally, non-Christian historians confirm this. There was an ancient Jewish historian named Josephus. He lived about AD 37 to about AD 100. He was born shortly after or right around the time, roughly, of the resurrection of Jesus. He writes this, and he was not a Christian:

"Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works [miracles], a teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at first did not forsake him; for—" here's the key—"He appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and 10,000 other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians—" little Christs—"so named from him, are not extinct to this day." They sent the historian Josephus out to do an investigation. Explain Christianity. He says, "Well, Jesus died and rose and a lot of people love him." That's the fact, the non-Christian reports.

Taken together, Thomas Arnold—he was the professor of modern history at Oxford—says this, "No one fact in the history of mankind is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort than the fact that Christ died and rose from the dead."

Jesus is alive. He's ascended into heaven. He's seated at the right hand of the Father. He'll hear your prayers. He'll forgive your sins, and he's preparing a place for you. We don't follow in the example of a wonderful dead man. We live in continual relationship with Jesus Christ, our great God and Savior who died for our sins and rose for our salvation and in so doing conquered Satan, sin, death, hell, and the wrath of God. And he is alive and that's why we love him, because he is a living God, not just an example, but a Savior.

Note: This transcript has been edited for readability.