

I am the Resurrection & the Life

By Pastor Matt Black

08 April 2007

Taste and See Lord's Day morning

John 11:25

Open your Bible to the **John 11**. The title of this morning's message is "I am the Resurrection and the Life". Let's stand together and read **John 11:25-26**.

John 11:25-26, "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

This morning we come to the most important event in human history. Many people are in churches today because of a religious observance. That is not why we are here today. We are here today not because of a church or a religion. We are here because we can all testify that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. He is risen indeed. You can go and visit the tombs of Buddha and Mohammed and Confucius. Their bodies are still there. Christ's tomb is empty. He is alive! He is not here—He is risen! His life is so very important to you and me today at this very moment. If you will listen carefully to what the Lord Jesus says to you and me in His Word this morning, it will absolutely change your life.

I know you have many things going on in your life right now, as we all do: kids, work, vacations, school, lots of responsibilities.

Perhaps you are dealing with some serious issues in your life, and you just don't know where to go or who to turn to.

I. The Importance of the Resurrection

I want to tell you this morning, that no matter what is on your radar screen, there is *nothing* more important than the fact that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. Why is that?

A. The Resurrection is important because of the **Claims** of Jesus Christ.

1. He claimed to **Titles** of deity (God).

- In **John 10**, He *claimed to be a member of the Trinity!* Because of this the Jews picked up stones to stone Him, and He said, (**John 10:32**) "Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?" The Jews replied, "For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."
- He said He was the "Lord of the Sabbath" **Matthew 12:8**, "For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day."

In Israel, there was only one Lord of the Sabbath Day, and that was the Creator of the universe who rested on the seventh day after he created all things!

But we know, as **John 1:1-3** says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

2. He gladly received the **Worship** of God from others.
 - The **disciples** worshipped Jesus. After Jesus calmed the waves and the wind in a life threatening storm, the Bible says in **Matthew 14:33**, "Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God."
 - When Jesus cast the **demons** out of people, the demons were afraid of Christ. It says in **Mark 3:11**, "And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God."
 - After **Thomas** had seen Christ raised from the dead, he fell down at His feet and answered Jesus, "My Lord and my God" (**John 20:28**).
 - When **John** saw the risen Christ in a vision on the isle of Patmos, Revelation 1:17, John says, "I fell at his feet as dead" to worship Him!
3. He claimed to have the power, that only God Himself has, that is the power to forgive sins.
Matthew 9:6, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins..."
4. He claimed to be the *only way* to God. **John 14:6** Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
5. He claimed to be the **Creator** of the world. Look at **John 8:56-59**, Christ is speaking to Jews that are upset at His claims, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. 57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? 58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. 59 Then took they up stones to cast at him." They wanted to stone him because He was claiming to be the Creator of Abraham, and by inference of all things.
6. He claimed to be the **Judge** of the whole earth.
Matthew 16:27, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." So Christ said, 'I'm going to reward and judge the world!'
7. He claimed to be able to grant eternal life.

Now this is the main theme of Christ's ministry. He says over and over and over again "believe in me".

- He said in **John 14:1**, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me."
- He said if you believe in me, you will never die! Look again at our text (**John 11:25-26**), "I am the **resurrection**, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

8. **Conclusion**: Now it would be outrageous for Jesus to claim that He could grant eternal life to whomever He wanted, that He was a member of the Trinity, that He had the power to forgive sins, that He created the world, and that He was the Judge of the earth if he was simply a good moral human teacher. Either the claims of Christ are true, or He was a liar, or even worse, a madman, but he could not simply have been a human moral teacher.

He claimed that eternal life was in Him and Him alone. Now if He is God in the flesh, then this makes perfect sense, but if he was simply a moral human teacher, he would have been the greatest liar or madman that ever lived. Either Christ was Lord, a liar, or a lunatic, but he could not have been a simply great moral human teacher and claim the things He did.

C. S. Lewis, the British author of the *Chronicles of Narnia* said, "A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

Not only are the claims

- B. The Resurrection is important because of the **Death** of Jesus Christ. It is important to look into the death of Christ.

1. The **Uniqueness** of His Death.
Christ claimed that there was no death like His, that it was unique. It was not a normal death.
 - a. **Substitution!** In fact He claimed that His death was for the sins of other people.

Christ was coming to fulfill ancient prophecy. Look at **Isaiah 53:6**, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

- Then Jesus Christ comes on the scene, and He claims to be dying for the sins of mankind.
John 10:11, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."
- John the Baptist comes on the scene and He says, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (**John 1:29**).

There is really nothing unique about death in and of itself. We all die. But here we find that Jesus' death was claiming to take away the sin of the world! That's amazing!

- b. In fact Christ **predicted** His own death and resurrection. If Christ is God, you would expect Him to prove that He is God by talking about His death, and predicting a resurrection from the dead! And that is exactly what we find. From beginning to end throughout His ministry, the Lord clearly prophesied his resurrection.
 - Early in Jesus ministry He said in **John 2:19-21**, "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. 20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? 21 But he spake of the temple of his body. 22 When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said."
 - He said in **Luke 18:31-33**, "Then he [Jesus] took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. 32 For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: 33 And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again."
 - He said in **Matthew 12:40**, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."
 - The very night He was betrayed, he said in **Mark 14:27-28**, "And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. 28 But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee."

2. The **Details** of His Death.

- a. They **beat** and scourged Christ.
They had beaten Him until His face was barely recognizable. They whipped his back with a cat-o-nine tails. This would have had leather strips with sheep bone and steel balls on the ends of them. The steel balls would have pulverized the flesh, and the sharp

pieces of sheep bones would have acted as razor blades and ripped his muscles to ribbons right down to the bone, exposing His spine. This scourging would have left Christ so weak, He could not carry His cross.

- b. They **mocked** Christ. They then crowned Him with thorns and blood ran down his face. They mocked Him, and pulled out His beard.

"And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee? (Luke 22:64). "And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him... and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands" (Mark 14:65).

- c. They **crucified** Christ. Then they nailed Him to a wooden cross and hung Him up to die. Every bone in His body was out of joint; sheer physical exhaustion and extreme thirst took their toll on the Son of God. Every minute was agonizing physically.

Medical doctors today have said that when the Roman soldiers pierced Christ's hands and feet, it would have crushed the nerves there and it would have been agonizing and intense pain. Have you ever hit your "funny bone" at the end of your arm? It would have been that kind of pain, but much more intense pulsing through His body.

- d. Spiritually He **bore** the wrath of God. The Son of God took the wrath of God for six hours. The Bible says during His death, for three hours (from noon until 3pm) "darkness over all the land" (**Matthew 27:45**). At that point He cried out "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (**verse 46**). Then He cried out with a loud voice and gave up His Spirit, bowed His head, and He died (**verse 50**).
- e. His death was **certified**. To make sure He was dead a soldier took a spear and stabbed Him. By the time the soldier did this Christ's blood was already coagulating because "water and blood" came out. The blood began to separate. He was dead.
- f. Then at His death we see further **Miracles** at His death. We find that the moment He died some very amazing things are happening. **Matthew 27:51-52**, "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; 52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, 53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

II. The Evidence of the Resurrection

- A. First item of evidence: His Burial site.

1. The **Prominence** of His burial site.
Christ was taken down from the cross. Let us first examine the case of the empty tomb. Jesus was a well-known figure in Israel. His burial site was known by many people. In fact Matthew records the exact location of Jesus' tomb. He states, "when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed." (**Matthew 27:59-60**). Mark asserts that Joseph was "an honourable counselor", in other words, He was a prominent member of the Council (Mark 15:43)—that is the Jewish Sanhedrin.

It would have been destructive for the writers to invent a man of such prominence, name him specifically, and designate the tomb site, since eyewitnesses would have easily discredited the author's fallacious claims.

2. The **Security** of His Burial Site.
The very prominence of the burial site made it secure, but we also have Joseph of Arimathaea and probably some servants put a TWO-TON stone in front of the grave.

Now the Roman government was very ripe for a Jewish rebellion. Christ had openly prophesied of His Resurrection, so what they did is they stationed a Roman garrison in front of the tomb. A Garrison has 16 soldiers that if had to guard the tomb. If one fell asleep or neglected their duty, there was only ONE penalty: DEATH. None of the soldiers were put to death after the tomb was found empty. We'll get to that in a moment.

B. The Eye Witnesses.

1. 16 Roman Soldiers

So we have witnessed the proof of Christ's resurrection. The grave was sealed with Ceasar's signet. A Roman Garrison of 16 soldiers, who had the treat of crucifixion if they slept or left their post could not keep the grave sealed.

Look at **Matthew 27:62**

62 Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, 63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. 64 Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. 65 Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make *it* as sure as ye can. 66 So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

2. 500 Jews

Matthew 28:1-8, "1 ¶ In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. 2 And, behold, there was a great

earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: 4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. 5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. 6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. 8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.

I Cor 15:3-5, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

Matthew 28

1 ¶ In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. 2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: 4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. 5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. 6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said.

Christ is risen! The stone was closed and sealed with Ceasar's seal. The penalty for falling asleep for these men or deserting their post was crucifixion. A Roman garrison consisted of 16 soldiers. They all "did shake" the Bible says. They were told "He is not here, He is risen!"

C. Conversion of enemies. Saul of Tarsus was an enemy Look at verses 7-8
7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. 8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

D. Radical change in the disciples behavior. Just hours before, the disciples were despondent, doubting, and discouraged. The apostles and the other disciples scattered like sheep.

All the sudden they are transformed and they are unstoppable. Peter gets up at Pentecost and preaches. What was His theme? Look at **Acts 2:32**, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."

Immediately after seeing the risen Christ, they were ready to conquer the world, and conquer the world they did! They indeed "turned the world upside down." In fact, all the apostles died for their faith in Christ

1. Andrew - crucified
2. Bartholomew - beaten then crucified
3. James, son of Alphaeus - stoned to death
4. James, son of Zebedee - beheaded
5. John - exiled for his faith; died of old age
6. Judas (not Iscariot) - stoned to death
7. Matthew - speared to death
8. Peter - crucified upside down
9. Philip - crucified
10. Simon - crucified
11. Thomas - speared to death in India
12. Matthias - stoned to death
13. Of course Paul, not of the 12, was beheaded in a Roman prison.

E. It was a radical belief in the first century. The way the Christian faith spread in one generation after the resurrection was explosive. Most of those who came to faith in Christ were poor, but some were highly educated. Those accepting the Christian faith would have had nothing to gain except death. You see to be a Christian in the Roman Empire, you had to worship the Emperor. If one was a Christian, that meant that you worshipped only the true and living God. Therefore many Christians were martyred for calling Jesus alone "Lord".

III. The Experience of the Resurrection

Listen, life is good, but as good as life is, it is going to end. So we can say, "Life is good", but *eternal life* is better! Ten out of ten people are going to die. Death is an ugly thing. We don't like to think about it.

Conclusion: What will you do with Jesus today?

Closing Hymn: 411 The Solid Rock