

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

March 23, 2008.

Introduction.

Do you believe in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ? In *Acts 26* the apostle Paul is on trial before governor Festus and king Agrippa. The crowd gathered for Paul's trial consisted of both Jews and Gentiles. In making his defense Paul asked the question, "Why is it considered incredible among you if God does raise the dead?" (*Acts 26:8*). Why is it judged to be incredible in your eyes if God raises the dead? In the question he asked, Paul is leaving no doubt in the minds of those listening to him that he firmly believes that God raises the dead. We can paraphrase what Paul said as follows : *It is a fact that God raises the dead. But why is it that you have judged that fact to be incredible?*

The denial that God does indeed raise the dead is not new. Among the Jews, the religious sect called the Sadducees denied the resurrection of the dead. In *Acts 23:8* we are told, "the Sadducees say there is no resurrection." They held to the view that when you die, you are finished. That's the end of you. There is no life after death. There is no spirit existence after death. And so we are told in *Acts 22:8* that the Sadducees do not believe in the resurrection, do not believe in the existence of angels and do not believe in the existence of spirits. The obvious contradiction here is that the Sadducees believed in God who is a spirit being. (*Jn.4:24*).

In *Matt.22:23-33* the Sadducees challenged Jesus on the subject of the resurrection. But they came out on the losing end of that debate. One of the most important foundation blocks of Sadducean theology is *Exod.3:6*. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush God said to him, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Jesus quoted this verse to the Sadducees. The key in

this verse is the verb “**I am**”, present tense. God did not say to Moses, “I was the God of...” He said to Moses, “I am the God of” And so Jesus, in working out the implications of this truth, said to the Sadducees, “He is not the God of the dead but of the living.” The idea is that, yes, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob died but they are not dead. They are alive and God is and continues to be their God.

In *Matt.28*, the Sadducees faced a serious dilemma. The Sadducees were regarded by Rome as the religious leaders of the Jews. The chief priests and his followers were Sadducees. From a Jewish standpoint it was the Sadducees who orchestrated the crucifixion of Jesus. After Jesus died the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate with a request. Turn to *Matt.27:62-66*. (**read**). Three days later Jesus rose from the dead. Now note what happened. Look over to *Matt.28:11-15*. (**read**). Faced with the reality of Jesus’ resurrection, they closed their minds to it and set about to spread lies in a futile effort to destroy the truth. Defeated in debate and defeated in reality, the Sadducees held on to their lies, rejected Jesus and continued their war against Jesus. This is how the world deals with truth. And then the world says that Christians are irrational people.

The Sadducees were not the only ones who did not believe in the resurrection and life after death. We discover from *Acts 17* that the Athenian philosophers also did not believe in the resurrection. While on a visit to Athens, the apostle Paul was asked to address the Council of the Areopagus about his beliefs. Paul presented the gospel to these Athenians. They listened well until Paul began to speak about the resurrection. We are told in *Acts 17:32*, “Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer.” The idea is they burst out laughing and began to mock Paul. For these Athenian philosophers, the doctrine of the resurrection was the most ridiculous doctrine worthy of ridiculing laughter. This is how the world deals with truths it rejects but cannot disprove. They mock it and they laugh at it. And then they say that Christians are the ones who are irrational.

Some of the Athenians believed in the immortality of the soul. But they all did not believe in a coming physical resurrection. They believed the teachings supposedly taught by their god, Apollo. Apollo taught, *“Once a man dies and the earth drink up his blood, there is no resurrection.”*

Why The Denial?

The question arises : Why do men deny the doctrine of the resurrection? The answer I want to set before you today is two-fold. **Firstly, men deny the resurrection because no resurrection means no final judgment.** Fallen man does not want a final judgment. Recently, a man asked me : How can people in high places be so corrupt and carry out such wicked schemes? My answer to that man was : they do not believe in a final judgment. If they believed in a final judgment, both theoretically and practically, they would be careful how they live because they would know final judgment is coming.

But this fact is not only true of people who are in high places. This fact is true of every sinner. If the man in the street believes in a coming final judgment, he would be very careful how he lives. If all those pedophile priests and adulterous TV preachers believed in a coming final judgment, they would have been very careful how they lived. If businessmen believe in a coming final judgment, they would be very careful how they conduct their business. If judicial officers believe in a coming final judgment they would not be corrupt breakers of the very law they are supposed to uphold and enforce. Fallen man does not want a final judgment because he wants to live as he pleases without having to worry about giving account for his life to God.

What about Christians? Do they believe in Christ’s second coming and final judgment? I am sure each Christian in this building believes those doctrines in their heads. The question is : do you believe these doctrines in practice? Do you apply these beliefs in your daily practical life? If we do, Peter asked, “what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?” (*2Pet.3:11*). John said everyone who believes these

truths purifies himself just as Jesus is pure. (*1Jn.3:3*). Justification does not mean there will be no final judgment for the Christian. Paul said, and note carefully his words, “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” (*2Cor.5:10*). In the words “we ... all” Paul included himself. “Must” points to that which is a divine necessity, to that which is divinely set and cannot be changed. Christian, do you live as if you believe in the second coming of Christ and final judgment?

Final judgment means having to give an account to God for the life you lived on earth. In the final judgment you will give an account according to God’s standards, God’s rules of justice and righteousness. In the final judgment you will have to give an account for your thoughts, your words, and your deeds. *Jer.17:9* says, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately wicked; Who can understand it?” The “**heart**” is not the organ in your body. The heart is the mind of man. Only God understands how wicked your mind is. Why? In *vs.10* the Lord said, “I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds.”

The Bible makes it clear that God knows your thoughts (*Psa.94:11*), and the intents of your thoughts (*Gen.6:5; 1Chron.28:9*). God knows your words even before you speak them. (*Psa.139:4*). Jesus said you will have to give an account for every careless word you speak. (*Matt.12:36*). It goes without saying that God knows every act and every deed a man does, regardless of whether they are done in the greatest of secrecy. God knows when you are doing something wrong despite your lying self-righteous protests about people wrongfully judging you. You can be self-righteous and complain about being wrongfully judged with your spouse, with your parents, with your friends, with your pastors, but God knows your heart and every secret of your heart.

Psa.10 shows us how deeply rooted in every sinner is the mindset that desperately wants to believe that there will be no final judgment. In this psalm the wicked seeks, firstly, to convince himself that there is no God. *Vs.4* says “All his thoughts are, ‘There is no God.’” Unable to fully convince himself, he moves to the second stage of trying to

convince himself that if there is a God, He does not care. *Vs.II* says, "He says to himself, 'God has forgotten; He has hidden His face; He will never see it.'" But this second argument does not fully satisfy him. So he moves to the third stage. *Vs.I3* says, "He has said to himself, '[God] will not require it.'" Why worry? There is no final judgment. I can live as I please. I do not have to account to anyone how I live.

The Bible shows us that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is tied to the doctrine of the coming final judgment. This was the very point Paul was making to the Athenians when they began to laugh and mock. Please turn to *Acts 17:30-32a*. (**read**). Paul was making it clear that God has fixed or appointed the day of final judgment. On that day God will judge the world, that is, the world that began with Adam and that will end with the last person to be born.

Now note, the final judgment will take place "in righteousness", that is, based upon God's standards of righteousness and justice. And God's final judgment of this world will take place through One whom He has appointed. Who is this One? He is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. The indisputable proof that the final judgment will take place and that the Lord Jesus is the divinely appointed one who will do the judging is the fact that God raised Him from the dead. In other words, resurrection means there will be a final judgment.

When Jesus lived on this earth He had no doubt in His mind that He would die, be buried, be raised from the dead the third, day, ascend to His Father and return a second time as the final Judge. Let me briefly demonstrate these truths. In *Matt.16:21* Jesus told His disciples that He will "suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day." In *Jn.14:3* Jesus told His disciples, "If I go ... I will come again." *Acts 1:9* describes for us Jesus' ascension. And in *vs.II* we find this promise, "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

In *Matt.25:31-46* Jesus described for us the coming final judgment. And how does He begin His description? He begins with His return in glory, a return that presumes a prior departure. And He made it clear that He will be the One sitting on His glorious throne to judge the nations that will be gathered before Him.

In *2Thess.1:7-9* we are told that the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven in flaming fire with His mighty angels. Why will Jesus be revealed? The *first* reason given is that He is coming to judge and punish all those who did not believe in Him, all those who did not obey the gospel. The *second* reason is that He is coming to be glorified in His saints, that is, those who believed in Him. Belief in Christ unto salvation is tied into His first coming, death, burial and resurrection. But fallen man knows that if he can get rid of the resurrection, he can get rid of the final judgment.

Secondly, men deny the resurrection because they hate Christianity. They know, as Paul argued in *1Cor.15* that if the resurrection could be disproved Christianity will crumble in the dust and be completely destroyed. Please turn to *1Cor.15:12-19*. (**read**). Paul's argument is in two parts : *vss.13-15* & *vss.16-19*. *Vss.13 & 16* set for us the same premise : if there is no resurrection then not even Christ is raised. And then Paul made it clear that if there is no resurrection, preaching and faith are vain or useless or empty. If there is no resurrection Christianity is a lie and Christians are liars. If there is no resurrection there is no forgiveness of sins. If there is no resurrection Christians are the most deluded pitiful people in the world.

We do not need atheists, humanists, and the many other haters of Christianity to tell us that Christianity is false and Christians are the most deluded pitiful people in the world. The Bible acknowledges the fact that if it can be clearly proven that Christianity is false that Christians would be the most deluded pitiful people in the world. As a matter of fact the Bible sets before its haters what they need to do to prove that Christianity is false. All they have to do is prove that the resurrection is false and that Christ did not rise from the dead and Christianity will crumble into the dust. But the reality is that there is no one on

the face of this earth who can prove that the resurrection of Christ is false and did not take place.

The Resurrection – What It means?

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is a fact. Paul made it clear that when Jesus rose from the dead, He was seen by individuals like Peter and James. (*1Cor.15:3-8*). The James referred to here is the Lord's brother. He was seen by the apostles. He was seen by a the small crowd gathered with the apostles in *Lk.24:36ff*. He made a special appearance for Thomas. (*Jn.20:26-29*). At one time He was seen by over **500** people. And lastly, He was seen by Paul himself. Paul's conversion was the result of Jesus meeting with Paul on the road to Damascus. (*Acts 9:1-9*). What does it mean for us that Christ Jesus rose from the dead?

Firstly, the resurrection of Jesus means that He is all He claims to be. He is the second member of the Triune God-Head, the Son of God. *Rom.1:4* says He "was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." He is God of very God. *Col.2:9* says, "For in Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form." He is the Creator. *Col.1:16* says, "by Him all things were created." He is the great I AM. (*Jn.8:58*). He is the One who appeared to Isaiah in that great vision. (*Jn.12:41*). He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. (*Jn.1:29*). He is the Savior of sinners. (*Matt.1:21*). He is the way, the truth and the life, and no one can come to the Father but through Him. (*Jn.14:6*). He is the one and only mediator between man and God, the One who gave Himself as a ransom for sinners. (*1Tim2:5-6*). We can go on and on with the list. We can spend the next few hours and go over chapter after chapter in the N.T. outlining the truths concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. The resurrection means He is all that He claims to be.

But there are two important points I want to make clear to you. **Firstly**, He is God's final messenger on this earth. Turn to *Heb.1:1-2*. (read). Note the verbs, "spoke" and

“has spoken”. They are both past tenses. God has spoken and He is finished speaking. We ask, well, what about the apostles? Luke makes it clear in *Acts 1:1-2* that the work of the apostles is the continuation of the work of Jesus. In the last two thousand years many have arisen claiming to be divine or claiming to be divine messengers. They are all false. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Father’s final messenger to this world.

In *Matt.19:5* the God the Father declared, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!”. As we saw in our study last week, the verb **“listen”** does not focus on simple listening. It is a command to listen and obey. Close your ears to all other voices. Close your ears to all those who are making claims to be divine. Close your ears to all others who have made and are making claims to be God’s messengers to you. Open your ears only to Christ’s voice. Listen to Him and obey Him. In *Jn.10:27-28* Jesus made it clear that those who hear His voice and follow Him, He will give to them eternal life.

Secondly, please turn to *Jn.8:24*. (**read**). Take note that the word **“He”** is in italics. That means the word **“He”** does not belong to the Greek text but is put in by the translators for smoother reading. But sometimes, as it is in this case, it is better to have the truth with the awkward reading. Jehovah Witnesses, who deny the divinity of the Lord Jesus, translated the **“He”** as if it belongs to the text. But the Greek words **ego eimi** does not mean “I am He”. **Ego eimi** means **“I am.”** In *vs.24* **ego eimi** is used absolutely. The same is true in *vs.28*. Jesus said to the Jews, “When you lift up the Son of Man, (**that is, when you crucify Him**), then you will know that I AM.” In *vs.58* Jesus said to the Jews, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM.” This absolute use of **“I AM”** by Jesus is also found in *Jn.4:26; 13:19; 18:6*.

Now note carefully what Jesus is saying in *Jn.8:24*, “unless you believe that I AM, you will die in your sins.” Unless you believe that I am God, unless you believe that that I am the I AM who was revealed to Moses, you will die in your sins and end up in hell. In other words, Jesus cannot be your Savior unless you bow with Thomas and say

to Him, “My Lord and my God.” (*Jn.20:28*). Jesus cannot deal with your sins and save you from your sins unless you bow and confess to Him, “My Lord and my God.”

Secondly, the resurrection of Jesus means He alone is the Savior of sinners. Now I know we will have some overlap here with the previous point and some repetition from what was preached on Good Friday. On Good Friday I preached from *1Tim.1:15*, “It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Christ Jesus is the only One who ever came into the world to save sinners. As I pointed out, Jesus did not come to help you get saved. He did not come to point you to the way of salvation. He did not come to start a self-help religious program, which if you follow, you will enter into eternal life. He came to save, to actually and totally save sinners.

Jesus is not only your Savior. He is your salvation. Let me use an illustration. For Noah and his family to be saved from the flood, they had to enter in the ark. The ark was their salvation from the flood that destroyed the world. The flood of God’s eternal wrath is coming upon sinners. Jesus is the ark of your salvation. You must enter in Him in order to be saved from that divine eternal wrath that is coming. Why is Jesus the only Savior of sinners? Because He did for sinners what no one else has done.

As a sinner, what are you facing? *Ezek.18:4* says, “The soul who sins will die.” *Rom.6:23* says, “The wages of sin is death.” God has set only one penalty for your sins and that penalty is death. What is this death? *Rom.6:23* gives us the first clue. The verse says, “the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Note where eternal life is found : in Christ Jesus our Lord. In this verse “**death**” is set in contrast to “**eternal life**”. In other words whatever eternal life is, this “**death**” is the very opposite. If this life is eternal, then the death is eternal. *2Thess.1:9* says sinner will “pay the penalty of eternal destruction.”

If eternal life is heaven, then this death is hell. If eternal life is spending your eternity with Christ in glory and bliss, then this death is spending your eternity with the devil in

shame and pain. In *Matt.25:41* Jesus described hell as eternal fire and said it was prepared for the devil and his angels. But what do we find in *Matt.25:31-46*? We find that all those who rejected Christ were cast with the devil into the eternal fire which is described in *vs.46* as the place of eternal punishment. In *Rev.20:14* this death is described as the second death. The verse says, "This is the second death, the lake of fire." *Vs.15* adds, "And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

"The wages of sin is death." This is what you are facing. "But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." What did Christ do? He came into this world. He was born through a woman. He was born without sin. He lived a perfectly sinless life. If Jesus did not live a perfectly sinless life on this earth, He could not do what He did for sinners. So what did Jesus do?

Let me use an illustration before I make the point. Let us assume you committed murder. You are found guilty and sentenced to die. You go through all your appeals but each appeal court confirms your guilt and sentence. On the day you are to be executed, your relatives gather to see you for the last time. In that gathering, your father step forward with his lawyer and informs the legal authorities present that he will take your place and die in your stead. Your father's request stuns everyone. The legal authorities are thrown into confusion but when they finally settle down, they took the decision to approve your father's decision. So your father duly takes your place. He dies in your stead. And you are set free.

When your father took your place, the legal authorities did not feel sorry for him, put the rope around his neck, beat him up and then send him home. No, they executed him. Even though your father was doing something for you that could have made the executioner weep, the executioner could not spare him. The law had passed sentence. The sentence was death. The sentence had to be carried out to the fullest. He had to die. Now if your father was also a condemned murderer, he would not have been able to take your place in die in your stead. That would have been legally impossible. Your father

had to be innocent of the crime of murder before he could take your place and die in your stead. When your father died in your place, legally he became a murderer. But the practical reality is that he did not become a murderer. This is a simple illustration of what Jesus did.

2Cor.5:21 says Jesus knew no sin. He had no personal experience with sin because He never sinned. Then the verse says He took your sins upon Himself. He became sin on your behalf. It does not say He became a sinner. The verse says He became sin on your behalf. He embraced the full penalty the Law demanded for your sins and He paid that penalty in full. He paid that penalty by His death on the cross. In a way we will never come to understand, He endured your eternal hell on that cross when He died for your sins. **Rom.8:32** tells us that when Jesus died for sinners, the Father did not spare His own Son. The Father could not spare His own Son. That would not have been justice. If He had spared His own Son, the full penalty for your sins would not have been paid. The punishment the Son received was so horrible, the sun hid its light, the Father turned His back and the Son cried out in utter desolation, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Jesus is the only Savior of sinners because He died for sinners, He was buried and on the third day He rose from the dead. (**1Cor.15:3-4**). Paul said in **Gal.2:20** the Son of God loved me and died for me. The penalty you are facing for sin is death. Your good works cannot pay for your sins. Your acts of charity cannot pay for your sins. Your religious devotions cannot be for your sins. The divinely set and unchanging penalty for sin is death.

Now think with me for a moment. Think through the history of this world. Think about the religions of this world. Think about the innumerable religious teachers and leaders this world has seen. Think about all the great religious men and women of this world. Which one of them did for you what Jesus has done for you? They all came telling you what you can do to save yourself, what you can do to help yourself, what you can do to hopefully gain favor with God in the final judgment. Why? They were in the same sinful

dilemma as you. They could not save you because they were trying to save themselves. Only Jesus did something to save you. Let me re-state that : Jesus did the only thing that needed to be done in order to save you. He died for sinners. He paid the divine penalty sinners were inescapably facing for their sins.

I have said it in this church in the past. I will say again and again. I believe **Rom.8:32** is the most frightening verse in the Bible. **Rom.8:32** says God “did not spare His own Son.” Now let me ask you, if you reject Jesus, if you reject salvation in Christ, why would God spare you? I assure you that God will not spare you. **Rev.14:10** says you will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger for all eternity in hell.

The resurrection means Jesus rose from the dead. The resurrection is the guarantee that every human being will be resurrected. Those who are saved in Christ will be resurrected. Those who are not saved will be resurrected. The resurrection means Jesus is coming a second time. The resurrection means Jesus is returning to pour out judgment upon this earth and upon the wicked who live on this earth. The resurrection means Jesus is coming to be glorified in His saints. The resurrection means final judgment is coming.

2Thess.1:7 tells us that Jesus will return a second time in flaming fire. **2Pet.3:11-13** tells us that the heavens and the earth will be brought to a fiery end when Jesus returns. **Rev.6:12-17** tells us that when Jesus makes His appearance, the sight will be so awesome, men and women will run and hide and plead with the mountains and rocks to fall upon them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb, the Son of God. They will know on that great day that their eternal nightmare has begun. Let the world laugh now. Weeping time is coming upon it. Let the world mock now. Begging time is coming upon it.

Let me ask you, are you ready for that coming final day of divine wrath and final judgment? When your name is called, be it by death or the Lord’s return, are you ready for that day of your final judgment? I told you that the death rate in the world is

averaging two persons per second? Are you ready to be one of those two persons any second of the day? I fear that one of these days, in your youthful arrogance and presumptuousness, God is going to teach you young people a couple lessons. Some of you faced death already and if God had not intervened, you wouldn't be here today. How quickly you can forget the death you faced and the God who intervened to spare you.

You want to play games with God, go ahead. But I assure you of this – that's a game you are destined to lose. God has warned, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever.” (*Gen.6:3*). That warning came very early. That warning came to Noah's generation. The word of God warns that there will come a day when you will call on God but He will not answer you. You will seek Him diligently but you will not find Him. (cf. *Prov.1:28*). This is why God has said, “Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.” (*Isa.55:6*).

Peter tells us that each day we live, that is a manifestation of God's patience towards us. (*2Pet.3:9, 15*). Peter said we should regard that patience manifested by God towards us as salvation, a physical salvation that keeps the door open to eternal salvation. But beware of putting the Lord to the test as Ananias and Sapphira did. (*Acts 5:9*). *Prov.29:1* says, “A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will be suddenly broken beyond remedy.” God is patient. But His Spirit will not strive with you forever.

You adults, are you ready for that day that is fast coming upon you? You look at yourself and you know you are growing old. You may be pretend to be young but that pretense quickly disappears when you are alone. Then your face becomes contorted with the pain you were hiding in public. Then you give your aging muscles a massage so they can keep going. Then you check your pulse to see if your heart is still beating. When you are in public you are the man. But when you get home “**grandpa**” sounds like music to your ears. Pretend all you want, your day is coming when your name will be called. Are you ready for that day?

If you are not saved, you can get ready for that great judgment day. Turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Ask Him to save you. Ask Him to save you today. Tomorrow is always too late.

One final word before we close. For the Christian the resurrection and return of the Lord is the message of confident hope. (*1Pet.1:13; 1Jn.3:3*). It is the message of comfort. (*1Thess.4:18*). It is the message of final victory. (*1Cor.15:57*). But it is also the message that gives to every Christian the great responsibility of the Great Commission. It is the resurrected Lord who commanded us to go and make disciples of all the nations. (*Matt.28:18-20*). It is the resurrected Lord who commanded us to preach the message of repentance in His name. (*Lk.24:47*). It is the resurrected Lord who said, "as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." (*Jn.20:21*). It is the resurrected Lord who commanded us to be His witnesses. (*Acts1:8*).

Paul's teaching on the return of the Lord and our resurrection as Christians in *1Cor.15:50-58* ended with these words, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord."

May the Holy Spirit open your heart today to see the glory of Christ, to see the love and mercy and grace of the Savior for you. In seeing Him and what He did for you, may your sins cease to be pleasurable and become horrible in your eyes and may you flee to the Savior and lay hold of His feet and plead for saving mercy.

May the Holy Spirit begin today to draw your heart away from the love of this life, the love of this world, the love of the things of this world, and may He begin to fill your heart with the love of Christ, the love of eternal glories, the love of heavenly things. May He begin to fill your heart with love and longing to be with Christ which, as Paul said, is so far better. But at the same time, may the Holy Spirit begin today to fill your heart with love for the gospel, love for sinners, and love for toil in the gospel. May your lips never cease to tell others, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

