



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 20:1-10

“The Resurrection of the Redeemer”

TRANSCRIPT

[RECORDING BEGINS ABRUPTLY]

[Prayer] ...significant of the fact that Christ is risen and also Lord, if it should be that we have not yet put our trust in him who is alive, may tonight be the time when we do. We commit our meeting to Thee and pray that our hearts may be open to the reading and teaching of Thy word. Deliver us from that which may be in error and keep us, Lord, in the center of Thy will and in the center of Thy truth. And so we with thanksgiving look forward to the time of study and commit it to Thee. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight our subject is "The Resurrection of Christ." We have passed through the age of innocence, conscience, human government, promise and the age of the law which concluded with the death of Christ as we saw last Monday night.

Now, tonight we are dealing with the resurrection, which is extremely important and directly connected to the death of Christ. The climax of the good news is reached in the resurrection because in the resurrection faith is vindicated. I don't think we can really overestimate the importance of the resurrection unless we go on to say it is more

important than the death of Christ and we cannot say that. But it is difficult to overestimate the importance of this great event.

When you read the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, for example, you find over and over a great stress on the resurrection of Christ. In fact, take just one place Acts 17 in verse 18. There it is stated by Luke that they preached Jesus and the resurrection. So, this was an important feature of the good news of the Lord Jesus, the resurrection.

Far too often, I think, Christians have been inclined to regard the resurrection as something of an epilogue to the gospel, something like an addendum to the message, something like a codicil to the divine last will and testament. But this is no appendix to the faith in the New Testament. This is the faith. And an integral part of the message that we are to proclaim and that we are to believe as Christians.

Moberly once said, "Easter is the interpretation of Good Friday." Now what is meant by that statement is that we would not really know the victorious significance of the death of Christ were it not for the fact that he was raised from the dead. The resurrection is not a reversal of the death of Christ. It is not a sequel to the death of Christ. But it is really the divine interpretation of that which really took place when our Lord died. There was victory won.

And if we do not have the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, there are many, many things which we do not have. Even as human beings we cannot be sure that there is any good God if there is no resurrection. We cannot be sure that there is any moral universe. In fact, if there is no resurrection, the only supportable philosophy is a philosophy of stark pessimism. And if it be true that the light of the world, Jesus Christ, was put out on the cross at Calvary and did not rise from the dead, then back of the universe is what Hardy spoke of as a vast imbecility.

So, the resurrection assures us of the fact that our Lord's enterprise shall not be defeated in the earth. It assures us that it will ultimately flourish in the earth, because if

Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead, it is obvious that that cause that he represented shall surely succeed.

Michelangelo was not only a great painter, but he was also a teacher of painting. It is said that one of his pupils painted a picture and as he was looking over it in order to evaluate it, he just wrote one word across it, the Latin word *unplius* which means broader or deeper. In other words, the picture lacked depth of treatment. And so, the resurrection is something like that in God's mind. It is an *unplius* which he has written across the human situation, so to speak, to say that there is something beyond the life that we are living today. There is a life beyond the dead. There is a whole realm of existence which is beyond this that we live in today, in which we see and feel and smell and hear. There is an invisible world beyond this world. And immortality is a fact.

Now we could say all of these things and that would not be strictly Christian. For after all it is not strictly Christian to say we believe in a life after death. Even they say that. Christianity is on something far more significant than that. But what I have said is simply to say that the resurrection, aside from its Christian implications, is extremely important just for such general truths as these. But we shall see it is far more important than these things.

Now I want you to turn with me tonight to one of the resurrection accounts and this one is found in the Gospel of John; so turn to John chapter 20 and we will read together verses 1 through 10. John chapter 20 verses 1 through 10. I think you're going to see as we read this account in John chapter 20, that this is one of the marvels of the word of God in that it is something of a pattern of the way in which God writes through his apostles of the great events which are described in the New Testament. It is in a sense, it is a model of the indirect and the discreet way in which the Bible relates an event that cannot really be adequately described. For we could never describe the resurrection. No one was there. We can only see the results of the resurrection. So it would be impossible for a human being to describe these events. And I say the Bible is a

model of the indirect and discreet way in which it describes these supernatural events, a testimony to the fact that it is not an account that was conjured up in the mind of some man.

Well beginning with the first verse now on page eleven-forty-three,

"The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, (now that disciple whom Jesus loved is undoubtedly the Apostle John) and saith unto them, They have taken away the LORD out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

Now probably you have noticed that as this account moves along it reaches its climax in that statement in verse 8 "and he saw, and believed." In other words, apparently John's intention as he drew up this account in the first 10 verses of the 20th chapter here is to tell us how he came to a faith in the resurrection. This is the climax. And when he writes "and he saw, and believed" then they turn around and go home.

In fact, if we were having an old-fashioned testimony meeting in which individuals were getting up and speaking of the blessing that the Lord had been to them in a

particular way. And if we were asked in this meeting, and the apostle John being present, to describe how we came to believe in the resurrection, why, this would be John's testimony as to how he arrived at his resurrection faith. Everything moves forward to this confession in the 8th verse, "and he saw, and he believed."

Now you notice that the opening few verses here have to do with the report of the empty tomb that Mary Magdalene made to the two men. It was the first day of the week. It was still dark, just beginning to dawn, when Mary Magdalene and some of the women came to the tomb.

Now you don't find in the account of the women in John's Gospel, and some have said as they have read this, 'You see there is a contradiction in the resurrection accounts. The other accounts say that there were women but John knows of only one.'

Now you might be taken in with this if you did not study the text carefully. But notice in that second verse that when Mary speaks to them, she says, "They have taken away the LORD out of the sepulchre, and we (we) know not where they have laid him." In other words, the Johannine account does know of the existence of others with Mary Magdalene. But as far as John is concerned, he is not concerned with the other women; he is concerned with Mary Magdalene.

It is often said that there are discrepancies in the Bible. I don't think that it is possible to prove that there are any discrepancies in holy Scripture. There are things that are difficult to understand. There are some things that are difficult to harmonize because we don't have all of the facts.

If you were to read the accounts of the Battle of Waterloo by Wellington, Napoleon and Marshal Ney, you would also find some discrepancies. They are human writings of course, but they agree in the main facts, and I'm sure that many of the apparent discrepancies could be harmonized if the men had been able to sit down and iron them out.

So, in the Bible there are no discrepancies. There are difficulties and there are things that are hard to harmonize. But we find usually that if we study the Bible enough, sooner or later these things do harmonize.

I remember once that a history class was given the assignment of studying the French Revolution, and they were told specifically, the children in the class, to investigate the report by which King Louis XVI was sentenced to death and to bring in some word on it. And so the pupils came together after they had studied and one of them stood up in the class, or a large number actually agreed in this case, that the vote was unanimous. And so they reported to the teacher, we studied matter and the vote was unanimous that King Louis XVI should be put to death. And then there was another report given. No it was not unanimous, but the vote was a majority of one. And finally a third report was given. No it was not unanimous. It was not a majority of one, but it was a majority of one hundred and forty-five out of a vote of seven hundred and twenty-one.

Now at first glance these three reports on the vote taken might seem to be hopelessly contradictory and I think that we would probably write them off and say yes just contradictory reports. The whole truth is undoubtedly in one of these accounts but not in all. But it was in all. Actually three votes were taken. The first vote was on the issue of the Kings guilt and it was unanimous. The second vote was on what punishment he should be given, and the vote was a majority of one hundred and forty-five out of a vote of seven hundred and twenty-one that he should be put to death. And then a third vote was taken on the question of when he should be put to death. And by a majority of one it was decided that he should be put to death immediately. So you see actually the truth was involved, what was in the three reports that had been given and not in any one of them. But it was necessary to harmonize them. So in the Bible there are many things that need to be harmonized. And as we study these harmonies will appear, but there are no discrepancies as far as I can tell.

Well, Mary Magdalene came early in the morning when it was yet dark and remember in John's writings when he says, "When it was yet dark." We want to ask ourselves the question of why does he give us this little bit of information. Is this significant or not?

Now John, as I think I have said to his audience before, I teach so many places during the week that sometimes I get a little confused about where I have made some chance remark like this. But I think I have at one time or another made reference to the fact that John is the kind of gospel in which the author sees significance in all of these external physical events. And he sees significance frequently in the external visible life around him, as compared with the spiritual events that he is describing.

For example, I said last time in connection with the Matthean account of our Lord's death, that that the fact that this darkness came over all the land was intended to give us some clue as to that which was transpiring on the cross. It was dark because God was dealing with sin. And so here when we read here "while it was yet dark," it is John's way of suggesting that if there is no resurrection things are really dark. In fact, I think that John included this to show us that the whole spiritual realm is dark before the resurrection and this little statement "while it was yet dark" is just his way of saying that the outward visible universe is symbolical of the spiritual situation if Jesus Christ did not come forth from the grave.

Now when Mary arrived at the tomb she saw "the stone taken away from the sepulcher." That means she saw the empty tomb. This is a witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ which has never been adequately answered by unbelievers. It is almost impossible, in fact I think impossible, to find any real explanation for the empty tomb other than that Jesus Christ arose from the dead.

And I was reading a few days ago, not a few days ago but actually a few years ago a commentary on this particular gospel written by a man who is somewhat liberal in his theology. And I was impressed with the fact that in verse 1 when he came to these

words "the stone taken away." He said "This expression in the Greek text implies no doubt, no doubt," he said, "a supernatural removing." And that of course is John's intention. He wants us to understand that this is a supernatural removing of that stone.

Well, when Mary arrived at that tomb and she saw that the stone had been taken away, "she ran and she came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved." And I can just see Mary as she gathers up her garments and runs back into the city looking for Peter and looking for John.

Now apparently Peter and John were not staying in the same house, because it says in the second verse that she went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple as if they were living in different spots. Perhaps Peter may have been living on, let's say just for the sake of saying, he was living on Bethlehem street and so she went to Bethlehem street and she knocked on the door. And you can see Peter as he comes sleepy eyed and in his pajamas, that's what they, I don't know exactly what their pajamas looked like in those days, but he had on his pajamas anyway, and he was, 'What in the world, Mary, are you doing here this morning?'

'They've taken away the body of the Lord, and we don't know where he is. We went out to anoint him and the body is not there.' And I could just see Peter, 'Wait just a minute Mary, while I get my sword again and also put on my clothes and we'll go out and we will really do in some of these who have taken away the body,' because he thought that surely some further indignity had been committed against the body of the Lord Jesus.

And so the two of them together say, 'let's go to John's house.' And so they go to John's house and he lives over on Jericho Street and so they knock on John's house, you know. And John too comes sleepy eyed to the door in his pajamas, and being much younger, he's much quicker and faster than Peter and so they, the three of them, start toward the tomb.

Now, the text says in verse 3, "Peter therefore went, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together." And so you can see them starting out

and I'm sure they must have started out full steam, perhaps even ran the first four-minute mile on the way out to that tomb. At any rate, "The other disciple did outrun Peter," that is John, because he was much younger than John, just as if Steve and I were running, you see, I would undoubtedly out run him, [Laughter] because being much younger and in much better condition, why I would arrive there first.

John arrived first at the sepulcher, and he stooping down and looking in took a glance. Now there are three different words used in this passage for "seeing." Notice this one right here in verse 5, "saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in." Now notice the next verse. "Peter followed, went into the sepulcher and seeth the linen clothes lie." That's a different verb. And then finally in verse 8, "and he saw, and believed." And that is a third verb for "seeing". So three different Greek words for seeing are found in this context.

Now, the one that is used in verse 5, "And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in," is a verb that is frequently used of a simple glance. So you can see John as he races to the sepulcher and Peter is behind him. He runs up to the sepulcher, and since it, I'll describe it in a moment as it most likely was or at least a similar sepulcher, he went up and he took a look in and he saw the linen clothes within. And not taking a real good look, because he just took a glance and he saw the white garments, and then I'm sure that he must have said, 'Oh, the women again, they've misled us. The body is there, and after I could have been sleeping getting this extra hour's sleep, you know.'

This is all that is going on in his mind as Peter is running, huffing and puffing, you know, and finally arrives. And Peter is different from John. John is the quiet, speculative, meditative, lover of the Lord Jesus. But Peter is the aggressive American in the crowd, you know, and so he comes up and he shoves John aside and he goes right down into the sepulcher.

And so the text says here that he "went in to the sepulchre, and he seeth the linen clothes lie." Now this word is a word from which we get our English word theorize "theoreo". So that this means "to ponder and reflect upon those clothes." For as Peter went down and into that sepulchre, he saw that the body was not there. And yet, the clothes were still there. And so Peter stood there reflecting on the significance of the fact that the clothes were still there but the body was gone. And perhaps he turned around and said, John, John, come here. And so John comes down into the sepulchre, and when he looked, "he saw and he believed" the text said.

Now I want to ask you a question or two. Try to answer them. What did he see? And what did he believe? Because it is obvious that his faith is bound up in the answer to these two questions. "He saw and he believed." What did he see that led him to faith in Christ? What did he believe as he pondered those garments?

Well, in order to understand this, we must carefully examine the words in verse 5 and 6 and 7. And there are two things that John states that he saw. The first thing that he saw is the "linen clothes lying." Now that is stated in verse 5 and in verse 6. Now in order for you to get the full force of this I'm going to have to retranslate the Greek text. It is not so much that he just saw the linen clothes lying. But the Greek text lays a great deal of stress on the word "lying". He saw the linen clothes "as they were lying." In other words, it is the position, it is the makeup, it is the way in which those clothes were arranged that is significant for John.

Now let me stop right at this point and describe the sepulchre and what John apparently saw. Many years ago a man by the name of Gorton was reflecting on the true place where our Lord Jesus was crucified. He knew that the place was supposed to be the place of a skull. And he knew also that as far as he could tell, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre within the walls of Jerusalem did not answer to that description. And therefore, the claims of the church, which said that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is over the place where our Lord was crucified, were most likely false.

Well he noticed that to the north of the city of Jerusalem was a skull shaped hill. And one day as he was sitting down on that hill, he reflected that if this is the place where the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified to the north of the city near the Damascus gate, then there should be a garden nearby. And so he set his men to digging, General Gorton did, and sure enough they did come across a garden. And as they were digging, they also came to some white limestone and they discovered within that limestone a grave, a sepulchre.

Now it is most likely that this sepulchre is not the sepulchre in which our Lord was placed. It probably is a century or two later. But it undoubtedly is in the same place, the same vicinity. And the sepulchre itself is also most like very close to the one in which our Lord was placed.

Now if you visit Jerusalem today, you are shown this sepulchre. It is just a little bit less than four feet high. It is about two feet broad. And the outside is now perpendicular. And on the side there is a little ridge and in this ridge, which is about ten or twelve feet broad and about a foot deep, there is a circular stone, very much like a grindstone, a little over four feet high, which rolls up and down this ridge in order that the stone, if it is rolled aside, may open the sepulchre or if it is rolled over the sepulchre door, will close the aperture.

And inside this, as you go inside, on the right side, there is a ledge. And this ledge is a foot or so off the ground. It is about as long as the sepulchre itself, which I think is about six or seven feet deep. Then at the back, on this ledge, there is a little raised step for about a foot and a half, on which, when the bodies were placed there, the head would be place on the ledge and the rest of the body would rest on the raised part, the little step, and the rest of the body would be on the ledge.

Now as John and Peter arrive, they went down in. The Greek word is just that word. They went down in and in that sepulchre they saw the linen clothes as they were

lying and the statement is made in the next verse, "and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

Now it's obvious that John gave this great significance, because there is no need to speak of the position of the linen clothes and of the napkin if there were not for him very significant.

Now let me stop for just a moment and describe how bodies were buried, because you need to understand this to understand the significance of these grave clothes as they were lying there on that ledge. It was customary when a person died, if he were given a proper burial, for the body to be washed. And then the body would be placed in myrrh and aloes. Now myrrh and aloes were powdered spices. They were powdered like our talcum powder. I'm not sure the texture is exactly the same because I'm not that familiar with it, but they were powdered spices. So, the body was placed in myrrh and aloes; it was powdered.

And then as the body was wrapped, it was wrapped with white linen gauze-like substance. And in the folds of the gauze, as it was wrapped around the body in circular fashion, spices usually thick, gummy spices were inserted. So you can see that when it, the body, was finally prepared for burial, it would be in the white powdered myrrh and aloes and then within the folds would be the thick, gummy spices.

Now the head was wrapped separately and the napkin was wrapped in circular fashion about the head. To show you the biblical description of it, turn to verse 39 of chapter 19 and the statement is made there, "And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight. And they took the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices as the manner of the Jews is to bury."

So, as John looked and saw the linen clothes lying on that ledge, he undoubtedly came to, as he says, faith in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. What was it then?

Well, as John reflected upon this, he realized that if this had been an enemy of the Lord Jesus, why surely he would have taken the body and the napkin and the clothes away with the body. Or if it had been possible for them to take the body away and leave the clothes there, there would be undoubtedly some indication of it because with the powdery myrrh and aloes it would have been impossible to unwrap that body and not have some of the remains be left on the floor. And it would have been impossible to wrap it up again without some evidence being given of the fact that it had been.

And it could not possibly have been the work of one of the disciples because they did not believe that he would rise from the dead. And so as John pondered that, he saw that the garments of the Lord Jesus argued strongly for the resurrection of Christ.

But then he states secondly, not only that he saw the linen clothes lying but he saw "the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes," that is, it was on the ledge at the back, "but wrapped together in a place by itself."

Now, the Greek word here is a very interesting word. It means literally "wound around" by itself. Now what does that mean? Why that means that the napkin about the head of the Lord Jesus, because the weight of the napkin was not as great as the weight of the clothes of the body, had not done like the clothes about the body fallen flat, because the body was no longer within. But the napkin still retained its annular or circular shape, so that when he looked and saw the napkin about the head of the Lord Jesus, it was still round as if the body were still within it, except the body was not there.

And so John as he looked at it, when he saw the linen clothes as they were lying and the napkin wound around in the place by itself, he suddenly realized that the only thing that explains these facts is that the body of the Lord Jesus had somehow or other been swiftly dematerialized, had come forth through the garments as if they were not there and had come out of that sepulcher as if the stone on the sepulcher were not there.

Now someone said a long time ago, and I think there's a lot of truth in this, that the stone was rolled away from the sepulcher not to let the body of the Lord Jesus Christ

out, but to let John and Peter and the women in. And that is true, because we're going to see in just a moment in John chapter 20 that he lays great stress upon the fact that the body of Jesus Christ in his resurrection glory is not a body such as we have. It is a body that is able to go through doors.

Now some of us have tried that and it does not work. And we have sore noses or heads in order to testify to the fact that we cannot do it. But I want you to notice here that John in this 20th chapter lays stress on this very fact and mentions it twice as if to say, Now this is how that resurrection took place.

Notice the 19th verse of chapter 20, "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week." This is probably one of the first reasons why Christians began to meet on the first day of the week. It was the day in which the resurrection took place.

"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you."

Now why any need to mention that the doors were shut? Why just to stress the fact that the body of Jesus Christ has properties that our bodies do not have. It is a resurrection or glorified body. "The doors being shut." Now he stresses that. He didn't have to write that if he did not want us to see that fact.

Now verse 26, "And after eight days again." This was the next Sunday. "After eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you." In other words, as Paul puts it, there is first a natural body and then there is a spiritual body and our Lord Jesus Christ now has a spiritual resurrection body. And that is how he came forth from the napkin and the grave clothes, and that is how he made his exit from the tomb. So John as he pondered them, the napkin and the grave clothes, came to a faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

What did he believe? Why, I don't think that he believed in the Lord Jesus in the sense that he saw that he was his savior. He had already believed in him. As a matter of fact in the 15th chapter the Lord Jesus in the upper room discourse spoke to all of these disciples and he said, "Now are ye clean on account of the word which I have spoken to you." They had already believed in him. They had already committed themselves to him.

What was it that they believed? Well, why had they had gone to the sepulcher? They had gone to the sepulchre to be sure that that body was gone. And then they were going to look for that body, because they did not want some further indignity to be done to the Lord Jesus Christ's body. But when they saw those clothes and the napkin, they turned around, the text says, and went home. Why? Because they knew they could not find that body. They knew that he had been resurrected. They knew that he had experienced the bodily resurrection.

And by the way, we must never speak of resurrection, if we do not speak of the bodily resurrection of Christ. It is often said in the pulpits today, and by the way you must be suspicious of everything you hear in the pulpit. I say this spending an awful lot of my time behind the pulpit. You must be very, very suspicious of everything you hear. Do you know why? Because men who stand in the pulpit are not inspired. They may be men of God, some of them. I wish all were. But Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 that not all men who stand in the pulpit are men of God.

As a matter of fact, Satan has his ministers of righteousness, he says, so don't be surprised. Satan is an angel of light. The man who led me to Christ a long time ago said to me, "Lewis, if you want to find the devil, be sure and look in the pulpit for him." And he was absolutely right.

So, we cannot believe everything that we hear in the pulpit. And we often hear men stand in the pulpit and say, "This is as Easter. Now we're to celebrate the fact that Jesus Christ's influence lives on. Oh, Jesus Christ did not rise from the tomb bodily. That

is a crass literal way of looking at these events. Jesus Christ's influence lives on with us today. That it is the resurrection."

Now that is the line that Satan would give us, because the Bible very plainly says that Jesus Christ was raised bodily, bodily. And there is no such thing as resurrection if we do not speak of bodily resurrection. Now Paul will tell us why this is so significant in his letters.

But often today in the audiences, people do not know what Paul said and so to hear someone who is the Reverend Dr. So-and-so or the Reverend Mr. Such-and-such say that, well, that's good enough for them. If my pastor said that, Why, that's wonderful. But you see Paul or rather the New Testament exhorts us to be like the Bereans, "Search the Scriptures to see whether these things be so." And if I say it, you go home and search the Bible and see if I'm right and if you can prove me wrong, then I hope God will give me the grace to change. But if I'm right then I expect you to believe it because it's God's word, you see. But don't believe it because I said it. Believe it because the word of God says it.

Well then when we read, "Then the disciples went away again unto their own home," it's obvious that they believed in the resurrection, otherwise they would have been still looking for his body. John says, "For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead," in verse 9.

Isn't this strange? The Lord had told them this over and over again. He had told them this at least three times before he died. That he must go to Jerusalem. He must suffer many things of the chief priest and scribes. He must be killed. He must be buried and he must rise again from the dead. But they didn't believe him. They had not believed him until this time. They had not learned yet to take the Old Testament Scriptures and interpret them in the light of the events concerning the Lord Jesus.

Now they learned quickly and these same men who did not believe, in just a few days will be standing up before all of the Jews of that day, the learned theologians of that

day, and proving to them out of their own Scriptures, that the Lord Jesus Christ not only rose from the dead but that the Old Testament Scriptures prophesied that he would.

Well now before we stop tonight, I want to ask you now to turn with me to a passage in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, because I began tonight by pointing out the imperative necessity of the resurrection of Christ. Why is it so important that Jesus Christ rise from the dead? Let's take this passage in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verses 12 through 19 and look at it in the light of the question Why?

Paul is writing to a church which had believed in Jesus Christ. They had responded to his preaching. A group of Christians have been gathered together. They were meeting in the homes of the believers. They were meeting on Sundays remembering the Lord and growing in grace. But the Greeks have a difficult time with the idea of the resurrection, and some of this Greek thinking is still with us today, of course. But the Greeks felt that everything, or many of the Greeks did, it was quite popular particularly in Achaia where Corinth was. The Greeks thought that the body was, since it was material, was evil in itself. And therefore, to think of a resurrection of the body was to them a very difficult thing to accept, because that seemed as if having been freed from the body we would have then to go back into this tomb of the body again. And so some of them had reacted against the bodily resurrection. And that is why Paul writes 1 Corinthians 15 in order to demonstrate the necessity of the bodily resurrection of Christ. So let's read beginning with verse 12.

"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: (In other words, Paul is saying we cannot separate the resurrection of Christ from the resurrection of Christians, for he is a man such as we are apart from sin. In fact in this chapter he will say that he is the second man and the last Adam.) And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also vain."

Now I must give you your Greek lesson for tonight at this point. The word "vain" which is found in verse 14 is the word "kenos." This is the masculine form "kenos, kena, kenon." But anyway, the lexical form kenos. This adjective kenos means vain in the sense of empty. For example, if I were take a glass of water and hold it up and look at it and the water were gone from the glass, I would say "This glass is kenos," that is, it does not have any content. The water is gone from it. So that is the sense in which the word vain is used here.

"Our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain." It is empty. You put it in the Christ who rose from the dead. But if he did not rise from the dead, it is like expecting water in an empty glass. You see, your faith is empty. It does not rest upon anything solid. It does not rest upon the fact "if Christ be not raised from the dead." So you see, if Jesus Christ has not been raised from the dead, Paul's preaching is empty and our faith is empty. We could not trust the love of God. We could not trust the power of God if Jesus Christ has not been raised from the dead.

I remember a story which has always affected me somewhat. It's the story of King Clovis of the barbarians. It is stated that he was once told the story of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. And as the one who was telling it dramatically painted the picture of the Lord Jesus on the cross at Golgotha and the Romans standing about and some of the relatives of the Lord Jesus and the spear piercing his side, he was so effected that finally Clovis stood up and he said, You know, if I had been there with my franks, we would have dashed up that hill and we would have smitten those Romans and we would've taken him down from that cross. In other words, he was saying it was not just that this man should die; this is the only good man who ever lived.

And if it be true that Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead then there is no explanation of why he should die and we cannot trust the love of God at all, because a

loving God would not allow the only good man who ever lived to stay in the grave, to suffer the ignominy of the crucifixion.

But furthermore, we could not trust the power of God. If it were true that God is love and that he allowed the Lord Jesus Christ to hang on the cross there and could do nothing about it, how can we say that God is powerful?

You see, really the conflict of Golgotha is not the conflict of the Romans and the little band of believers, or the Jews and the little band of believers. The real conflict at Calvary is the conflict between God on the one hand and Satan on the other. And if Jesus Christ were not raised from the dead, then there was a shout in the underworld when he was put to death, We win, we win, we win. We have conquered God.

So you see, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is extremely important. Our faith is empty and our preaching is empty. No need to preach, I'll go back to the insurance business if I didn't believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I can do much better in the insurance business than I can do preaching the gospel as far as human values are concerned. Don't think that I would not have done a lot better than the salaries I might receive from some church.

So you see, it is important that Jesus Christ be raised from the dead. But that's not all that Paul says. "Yea and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not."

I've been telling you that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, but if he did not, I'm a false witness. I'm testifying against God not for him. You see, we are not neutral in this. I'm not just here telling you some tale that makes no difference. If it really didn't happen, not only is my preaching empty and my faith empty, but I'm really a liar.

And furthermore, I have been testifying falsely of God because I have said that he did this when he didn't if Christ be not raised from the dead. "For if the dead rise not,

then is Christ not raised." If there is no resurrection, he was not raised. "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."

And now here is the second part of your Greek lesson. For the word translated vain in verse 17 is not the same word as that found in verse 14. This is the word *mataos*. Now *mataos* is a little different from *kenos*. *Kenos* is the glass that is empty, but *mataos* is the glass that has holes in it. You see, I might take the glass and expect to drink water out of it. You come and put water in it, but as I pick it up the water drains out of it. And so, the glass does not do what I expect it to do, hold water. In other words, it is void if it is *mataos*. It is void of useful end or aim. It does not accomplish what it is intended to accomplish.

If I were to go out and get in my automobile and it had no motor in it, I could say it was *kenos*, that is it did not have any motor within it, but I could also say it is *mataos*; it won't go. It won't go.

Now, when Paul says here in verse 17, "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain," he doesn't mean your faith doesn't have any content in this verse. He means your faith doesn't do for you but you thought it would do when you put your trust in Jesus Christ.

Now, what did we think it would do when we put our trust in Christ? Why we thought this faith would bring us forgiveness of sin. But Paul says if he has not been raised from the dead, this faith does not do for me what I thought it would do. It does not bring me forgiveness of sins.

So you see, this word emphasizes the resurrection, that which Jesus Christ accomplished. This word emphasizes what we get from it, the forgiveness of sins. So he says, "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."

Now some people are like [French indistinct]. They say the modern man is not worrying about his sin, still less about their forgiveness. But that's not true. Modern man is worrying about his sins and he's worrying about the forgiveness of them. He may put

on a very happy exterior, but deep down within, every single one of you is concerned about the forgiveness of sins. You cannot help but be. You know why? Because God brings you to concern, because of your sins. He brings you face-to-face with the question of your sins. He always does it. He always stirs us up. We may try to forget it, but we cannot forget it.

For you see, "there is no peace," saith my God, "to the wicked." And until a man settles the question of the forgiveness of sins, he is troubled deep down within. He may not look it, may be very happy, may be very prosperous. He may cover it up by the veneer of religion and say, I'm a Baptist; I'm all right. I'm a Presbyterian; I'm alright. I'm a member of an independent church where it's evangelical; I'm all right. But if he hasn't believed in Jesus Christ, he's not all right and he knows it deep down within. "Ye are yet in your sins."

Carlyle, in one of his writings, pictures a man who is trying to get away from his shadow. And he runs and he runs, and he tries to dodge and twist and turn, but the black thing still dogs him. And finally he has to cry out, I can't get away from it, I can't get away from it. That's the man and his sin.

Take Herod, he didn't respond to John the Baptist, did he? What did he do? Well he cut off John's head. He said, Well that will finish John. And then you know the strangest thing happened. Suddenly, someone came in and told him about the preaching of Jesus and do you know that Herod's conscience spoke before his mind could marshal up any arguments. He said, It's John the Baptist raised from the dead. You see, he was still thinking about John in his subconscious.

I heard about men who had an argument with a Christian about hell. And he argued vehemently over a period of time that there was no hell. He didn't believe in any hell. He didn't believe in any lake of fire. That was something that old-fashioned people believed in along time ago, but he didn't believe in it. And then you know he was a traveling man. And one night he was staying in a hotel opposite a building which caught

on fire during the night. And he woke up in the middle of the night and he looked out the window and all he could see was just flames. And his first thought, he said afterwards, I'm in hell. [Laughter] And he went to his friend and he said, 'You know, I realized the truth that after all there must be a hell because my subconscious spoke before I had a chance to marshal any arguments against it and I thought I was in hell.' And according to the story, he came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well any way, here Paul says, we are still in our sins if there is no resurrection. In other words, there is no forgiveness if Jesus Christ has not been raised from the dead.

And finally now in the last verse or two of the section here, "Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." In other words, all those who thought they have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and had died in that faith in him, they really perished when they died. Paul says, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

Well, our time is up. But before we stop, you know it isn't enough for us just to talk about the resurrection as we have talked tonight. We must, we must conclude by saying that we all face the inevitable need for decision. It is not enough just to believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. It is not enough just to say the evidence is credible. But there must be a decision in the heart, because you see if Jesus Christ did rise from the dead, then the things that Jesus Christ said are true and therefore we must commit ourselves to the things that he said.

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Ye must be born again, marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

There is need for decision. Paul said, "But now is Christ risen." The angels said, "He is not here, for he has risen, as he said." Can we say, Christ liveth in me. If we can, then we can affirm with the Italian friars of Manarola. "They may kill me if they please, but they will never, never, never tear the living Christ from my heart." The resurrection is very, very important. Have you put your trust in him? That really is the issue of the resurrection.

Well, let's bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Heavenly Father, we thank Thee that we come to a God of the resurrection, a God who calls the things that be not as though they were. And we thank Thee for Jesus Christ who rose from the dead according to the Scriptures. And we thank Thee that he lives forever and ever. And most of all, Lord, we thank Thee that it is possible for us in simple faith to yield to him, to just thank Thee for that which he has done and receive the forgiveness of sins. And then Lord, wonder of wonders, Jesus Christ himself, the living Messiah comes to dwell in our hearts forever more. And Lord, we pray for each one present that Thy will may be accomplished in their lives. For Christ's sake. Amen.