

The resurrection of Jesus

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 January 2022

Preacher: Fabulous Moyo

[0 : 0 0] So, today we are going to be looking at the book of Corinthians. That's where the lesson is going to be coming from.

I had been going through this book in the past year. And when I got to this book, I started thinking about what the resurrection meant.

But God has got a sense of humor. In August, I then kind of passed away in terms of not passing away as such, but went blank for a day, a day and a half.

So, the message is not coming from my experiences of having basically gone unconscious for a day and a half. But it comes from a period where, before that, I was reading about the resurrection and thinking about the resurrection and what it means in relation to us being believers, as well as in relation to the context in which we live, where some people basically look at it as fiction.

And you also have Christians who almost want to sideline it and almost come up with an understanding where they are saying, well, we can love God, but these things that are almost miraculous, maybe we should just put them a little bit on the side.

[1 : 3 9] But when we come into Christian theology or when we begin to understand the gospel, what we understand is that the issue of resurrection is not just a side issue.

It is part of what the gospel is all about. And this text that we're going to look at today is one of those texts that's actually telling us that if we do not believe in the resurrection, we are, as it were, not Christians at all.

Because it is central to understanding who we are and it is central to the gospel that we believe in. So that's the crux of the martyr here in terms of the importance of this text.

So I'll be reading this text. Maybe I will break it into two and then we'll pray in between there. It's a little bit long, but I hope I'll be able to get there.

Is it possible for me to read from the screen? At the top there. Okay, thank you. Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.

[2 : 5 5] By this gospel, you are saved. If you hold firmly to the word I preached to you, otherwise you have believed in vain. For what I received, I pass on to you as of first importance, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas or Peter, and then to the 12th.

After that, he appeared to more than 500 of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

There Paul is saying, some of the people that were in the church in Corinth were still around during Christ's time. They had seen the risen Christ.

So that's what he means that most of them were still living, though some have fallen asleep, or though some have died. So there were still people, when Paul was writing this, there were still people that had seen the risen Christ, and some of them were in Corinth.

Verse 7, Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all, he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

[4 : 09] For I am the least of the apostles, and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect.

No, I worked harder than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

But if it is preached, that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say, that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then, not even Christ has been raised.

And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless, and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God, that he raised Christ from the dead, but he did not raise him, if in fact the dead are not raised.

For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile. You are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.

[5 : 26] If only for this life we have walked in Christ, we are of all people, most to be petered. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam, all die, so in Christ, all will be made alive.

But each in turn, Christ the first fruits, then when he comes, those who belong to him, then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom of God the Father, after he has destroyed all dominion, authority, and power.

For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be put to death, to be destroyed is death, for he has put everything under his feet.

Now, when he says that everything has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ.

[6 : 30] When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him, who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all. Now, if there is no resurrection, what will those do, who are baptized for the dead?

Oh, that's a biggie there. We are told here, some were being baptized for the dead. This is the only verse in all of scripture, that talks about people being baptized on behalf of the dead.

Well, a lot of theologians say here, it might have been a practice, that was taking place in Corinth, and maybe in other places in the early church, but the practice ended.

Nowhere else is it later taught, that we can continue, as it were, baptizing people on behalf of the dead. And it is also a dangerous practice, to develop a theology, based on one verse.

So, it is there, Paul says it, we will just, leave it as it is. We can't develop a theology, that's why even our denomination, has not developed that theology, in terms of, baptizing people on behalf of the dead.

[7 : 49] So, he then continues, he says, if the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized, for them? And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves, every hour?

I face death every day, yes, just as surely, as I boast about you, in Christ Jesus our Lord. If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus, with no more than human hopes, what have I gained, if the dead are not raised?

I will continue from there. So, from the previous verse, if you could just take me back, a little bit. Okay, thank you. Paul goes on to say, in verse 32, if I fought wild beasts in Ephesus, with no more than human hopes, what have I gained, if the dead are not raised?

Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. Do not be misled. Bad company corrupts good character. Come back to your senses, as you ought, and stop sinning.

For there are some who are ignorant of God. I say this to your shame. But someone will ask, how are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?

[9 : 04] How foolish. What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat, or of something else.

But God gives it a body, as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. Not all flesh is the same. People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another, and fish another.

There are also heavenly bodies, and there are earthly bodies. But the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another.

The sun is one kind of splendor, the moon another, and the stars another. And the star differs from star in splendor. So, will it be with the resurrection of the dead?

The body that is sown is perishable. It is raised imperishable. It is sown in dishonor. It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness.

[10 : 11] It is raised in power. It is sown in natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

So, it is written, the first man, Adam, became a living being. The last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural. And after that, the spiritual.

The first man was of the dust of the earth. The second man is of heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth. And as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven.

And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man. I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Listen, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and will be changed.

[11 : 21] For the perishable must clothed itself with imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true.

Death has been swallowed up in victory. Way or death is your victory. Way or death is your sting. The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

Thanks be to God, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

May the Lord add his blessings to the reading of his word. Well, some people have said, if you find a perfect church, do not go there, because you will spoil it.

In the church that we find in Corinth, we have one of those churches that was far from being perfect.

[12 : 34] You have various churches during the time of Paul that you see the congregations being praised for their faith, they are praised for various aspects with regards to how they conduct themselves.

But when we come to the church that was in Corinth, it was almost like a sore spot for Paul. Because if you read in 1 Corinthians, what you basically have, you almost have a catalog of problems that were taking place in the church in Corinth.

So in terms of how this book holds together, what we have is there was a household or a family in Corinth that went down to Ephesus, where Paul was at the time that he wrote this letter.

They went to him with a series of problems that were taking place in the church in Corinth. So if you go past that book, you see a number of problems that arise.

But one of the major problems that they also brought to him had to do with the question of the resurrection. What seems to have happened was there were some people in the church in Corinth who did not believe in the resurrection.

[14 : 03] If you look at this text that we have read, it shows two aspects of the problem that they had with the issue of the resurrection. One, the first half of that passage that we have read is basically a complete no.

There's no resurrection. That was their point of view. This way, people were calling themselves Christians in the church within Corinth. They were saying, no, there's no resurrection.

And the second problem that they raised in the second half that Paul addresses was, oh, what kind of a body will it be if someone resurrects? So they're saying they could not imagine any other kind of body that could come after resurrection.

So they were saying, there's no resurrection and what sort of body do you think it's gonna be? So the whole thing about resurrection for these believers that were in Corinth was there is no resurrection.

That was the problem that they were raising. What we see as we dig deep, we see that it was a problem that was basically coming from the society that they were living in.

[15 : 12] The society in the time that Paul is writing to the Corinthians was basically dominated by two philosophies, Epicureanism and Stoicism.

The Epicureans believed that when you die, when you die, you're gone, kaput. That's you. That's the end of you. So when you're living this life, you have to enjoy to the max.

That's basically, that was their philosophy. Give the body what it wants because you only live once. That's basically the Epicurean philosophy.

If you read in the book of Acts, you actually come across when Paul is in Athens, speaking at the Atrypagus and when he's given the floor to speak, when he gets to the point where he mentions that Jesus, the resurrection of Christ, the text says in Acts, some sneered at him and said, no way, we're not going to listen to you because that was the ongoing philosophy that anything to do with the resurrection, they threw it out.

That was basically the way of understanding. So Epicureans, on the other hand, were saying enjoy as much as you can with the body. And then on the other hand, the Stoics, the Stoics also believed that when you die, that's the end.

[16 : 45] But before you die, what you need to perfect are the virtues in you. So for the Stoics, they would deny the body. They would discipline the body. That was how they thought you would perfect these virtues in a person.

But where they agreed, both philosophies was, when you go kaput, when you die, that's the end. There's nothing on the other side. So this form of thinking was this kind of thinking that crept on into the church.

And some believers, as we read in this text, you could see they were coming from this point of view where they didn't believe that there was a resurrection after death.

And in my doing my rounds in Glasgow, working in Glasgow, I've come to an understanding or realization that the community or the context that we are living in seem almost to hold a similar philosophy.

Because one of the things that people usually tell me, sometimes they come into the taxi, and say, where are you going? They say, oh, I'm going out. And they say, oh, you only live once. You see? That's how they usually respond.

[17 : 59] You only live once. That's the phrase that I constantly hear. You only live once. And the response to that is almost, because you only live once, you need to indulge yourself or to make sure that you enjoy yourself to the max.

So, in other words, you can see that the community that we're living in, because people don't believe in God, therefore there's no also understanding of a resurrection.

They're almost going back to how people also believed in the first century, that the body has to be given what it needs, the body has to enjoy, because you only live once.

Once you're gone, you're gone. And I had a student from the University of Glasgow. So, I decided to ask him, so what happens to your body when you die?

And then he says to me, when I die, my body will break down and the atoms will basically break down into whatever, the next thing that they will break down into. So, that's basically the understanding.

[19 : 02] This was almost a similar understanding of what people in the first century believed in. But, what we then have here is this thinking getting into the church.

And then, Paul says, how can it be that if you are a believer, you can hold that kind of thinking? He says, a believer cannot hold that kind of thinking that life ends death.

And then, in the text that we read, he highlights a whole lot of issues why, he gives a whole lot of reasons why believers cannot hold on to the very fact, cannot hold on to this idea of thinking that life ends death.

One, he says, Christ himself resurrected. Christ resurrected. That's where he says, there are some even among you who are still living, who witnessed, who saw the resurrected Christ.

So, he's saying, this is part of the gospel that we preach. We are not just saying, these are not created stories. This is the reality. Christ rose from the dead.

[20 : 16] And if you are saying, Christ did not rise from the dead, you are also saying, God is a liar. In the same breath. Because, God is one that brought Christ to life.

and at the same time, God is the one who promises us that if we believe in Jesus, there is eternal life.

There is life to come. So, Paul is saying here, how can a believer, someone who holds on to saying, I believe in God, I love Christ, how can they turn around and say, there is no resurrection of the body?

There is the resurrection of the body. That's argument number one. It also goes on to say, the apostles are witnesses to this resurrection.

People like, apostles like Peter, he had walked with the risen Christ. What about doubting Thomas? Doubting Thomas was one of the early skeptics when it comes to the resurrection.

[21 : 24] When Christ resurrects and he has appeared to the other disciples and he hasn't appeared in the presence of Thomas, he says, no, unless I feel and touch that body.

That's when I can believe in this resurrection. When he fills the holes of the wounds where Christ had been crucified, that's where Paul, that's when basically doubting Thomas believes that, oh, for sure, he's not a ghost, but he is real.

So, that was the big issue that they were raising, that there is no resurrection. Paul also goes on to say, it's not only the apostles that had seen the resurrected Christ, it's not only some who were still living, even during that time who had seen the resurrected Christ, but also at one point we are told 500 people witnessed the resurrected Christ.

So, this is not a story, this is not a make-believe story. 500 at one go saw the resurrected Christ. Paul himself also gives another reason why he believes we shouldn't take this lightly.

He says he is going through all sorts of problems. If it was not true that Christ is resurrected, why would you fight wild beasts?

[22 : 57] If it was not true that Christ is resurrected, why would they face the kind of suffering that they were facing spread in the gospel? So, he's saying that for them was some of the evidence that the people in Corinth had to realize that this is part of the gospel, this is the truth, this is not a make-believe story about resurrection.

It is central to understanding. He goes on to say, God himself is the one that has made it possible.

But what we see in the people in Corinth, you could see there was an element in which some believers were beginning to undermine, as it were, the power of God or understanding what God can do.

So that's where we go to the second verse where they are questioning what nature of body is this that we will have. Can a body, how will it rise? How will the new body look like?

So you could see there was that undermining of what God can do. The undermining of God's power does not just lie in the way people in Corinth think, but I think in most of Christian history, even among believers, sometimes there is that a slightly lack of understanding all the attributes of God or who God is.

[24 : 27] Remember, the first Adam was made by God. So, even if you were to be cremated, probably some thought of, even in this context, thought of people who die in fire and disappear, and they say, how would they come back if the body is basically gone?

Even if you get buried, the body disintegrates. In other places like Africa, people get eaten by lions, and the body disappears.

So, for them, the understanding of what's going to happen to this kind of body is almost a question in the back of the hand. But what you can see there, there's this undermining, there's this lack of understanding of what God can do, in terms of the power of God, what God can do.

The God who says, I know the number of hairs on your head, the God who has this knowledge, whose knowledge is beyond what we can understand.

do you think he's not able to know your DNA exactly? To have you come back, and you have an understanding that it's me, it's not someone else.

[25 : 54] Because the nature of the resurrection were promised in Christianity, the coming back, you won't come back as someone else, it will be you, and you will know that it's you.

And we will know that it's you. If you can't understand, or if you don't have an understanding that it's you, how can that be good news?

If you come up as a different person who doesn't have an understanding that you are who you are, what's good news in that? So, Paul is saying, we will be resurrected.

The Corinthians will be resurrected. So, there's that need of understanding God's power, God's attributes, that God is all knowing, and if God says he will do it, he will do it for sure.

If God says, we will come back to life, we will come back to life. They questioned the issue of what nature of a body.

[26 : 57] God who has created the universe, do you think it will be difficult for him to bring you back? I was just looking at the nature of the universe, I was being told that there are billions of planets within a galaxy, and there are billions of galaxies within the universe that we know.

The God who has created something this magnificent, do you think it's going to be difficult for him to bring you back? I was also being told that we only know only about 5% of the known universe.

That's what our best brains know. Only 5% of the known universe. And that 5% of the known universe, they're saying there are forces and particles that we do not understand.

Remember, God is the one who created that universe that we don't even understand. And how can we then begin to question or in our own thinking, think, oh, God cannot bring you, drill you back to life?

Are we not undermining the power of God? Do we have a proper understanding of who God is?

[28 : 33] God is not a sum up or a tally of the best human brains or the best human inventions that are powerful. God is not a sum up of that.

He is far beyond than what we can imagine. We cannot comprehend God fully. We are basically his created products.

So, Paul is saying, we should not underestimate what God can do. God will bring us to life and God has promised in his word that he will bring us to life.

And God does not lie. And God sticks to his word. Do you believe when you die, you will come back in the resurrection, the final call, the resurrection?

Some Corinthians thought it was impossible. But scripture tells us that it is part of the good news. It is part of the gospel.

[29 : 45] It is central to the teaching of Christianity. Paul tells us that if we do not believe in the resurrection of the dead, if we do not believe that Christ was resurrected, if we do not believe that God will resurrect us, then we are better off going out into the world.

It is false piety that we are holding on to. We are better off in the world and living like the world. There you cause, again, like I was saying, the Epicureans, where he says, it is better for us to go eat and drink for tomorrow we will die.

That was basically Epicurean philosophy. So, that is what Paul says. If there is no resurrection, if Christ has not been resurrected, the problem of eternal sin or the problem of sin is still there.

Because Christ has not really died on the cross. That is what it basically says. Because the whole thing then becomes a lie. our sins are not yet forgiven. So, you can see that the understanding of the resurrection and what happens at the cross is all interconnected.

resurrected. And we will resurrect because God has given us Jesus Christ as the first fruit. Jesus Christ, the resurrection of Christ, as Paul says in that text, he is the second Adam.

[31 : 09] The first Adam died because of sin. And then the second Adam is Christ who conquers sin, who resurrects. And God in bringing Christ back to life, basically shows all of those who believe in Christ that this is what is going to happen to you.

For all those who believe in Christ. And unfortunately also, resurrection applies to those who do not believe in him.

Christian theology does not only end with the resurrection of those who love Christ. there is also a resurrection of those who do not. Because that's the nature of it.

That we are taught of eternity in this imperishable body, in this eternal body. We are taught there will be eternity. But also, for those who do not know him, we are also taught there is another eternity that you do not want to be part of.

But for believers, you can't hold on to saying you love Christ and you say, I don't believe in the resurrection. It is central to what the gospel is all about.

[32 : 31] God is true to his words. He says you will resurrect. He says you will come back to life. It is part of the good news.

It gets me excited, although sometimes I get a little bit frightened when I think about it. What will it be like? But at the same time, if God says it's going to be pleasurable eternity, then that gives me comfort because God is true to his word.

In Jesus, we have the first example. An example that all of us who love him, all of us who love God, will be brought back to life.

Well, I think I might have gone a little bit over my time, so I will leave it there.

But all I can say to you, it should comfort you that we will resurrect. The nature of the body, we are told by scripture, is imperishable.

[33 : 41] it will live forever. And that's good news. That's part of the gospel. Amen.