

Implications of the Resurrection

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: 27 March 2016

Preacher: Cedric Moss

[0 : 0 0] The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is certainly the greatest comeback story in human history.! And no doubt many messages will be preached this morning in our country and around the world.

And they will focus on the great comeback aspect of the resurrection. Many people will hear that since Jesus came back from the dead, they too can bounce back from setbacks and challenges of life.

And I fully understand how certain messages like that can be preached. I've certainly preached my share of them in my earlier ministry. But what is the resurrection of Jesus Christ really about?

And what are the implications for our lives? Well, Christ's resurrection not only has implications for our lives, but it actually has implications for the entirety of Adam's fallen race.

And this morning, I want to consider two implications from the words of the Apostle Paul, which he shared with a group of philosophers in Acts chapter 17.

[1 : 2 0] So if you have not yet turned there, please turn in your Bibles to Acts chapter 17. And this morning, our attention will be focused on verses 30 through 34. But for a larger context, I will be reading starting at verse 22.

Acts 17. And we begin this morning at verse 22. Before I read, let me just take a few moments to give some background to what we will read.

Starting in verse 1 of chapter 17, we see that the Apostle Paul and his missionary companions had gone to Greece. And when they had come to Thessalonica, they faced tremendous opposition from the Jews who were there.

And so they left and they went to Berea. But the Jews who opposed them at Thessalonica followed them and continued to oppose them. And the disciples feared greatly for Paul's safety, so they arranged for him to be evacuated from the city.

And those who were responsible took Paul to the city of Athens. And he waited in the city of Athens to be joined by Timothy and Silas. And we read that while he was waiting in Athens, Paul was provoked by the extent to which the city was given over to idolatry.

[2 : 4 4] And while there, each day he would reason with Jews and religious people in the synagogue and whomever he would find in the marketplace. And eventually some philosophers who heard that he was in town, they invited him to address them at the Areopagus.

And the Areopagus was a hill named after the Greek god Ares. And the hill was sometimes referred to as Mars Hill because Ares was the equivalent of the Roman god Mars.

And so the words that the Apostle Paul speaks that we will focus on in verses 30 through 34 were actually spoken to a group of philosophers gathered at the famous Areopagus.

So let's read beginning in verse 22 of chapter 17. So Paul's standing in the midst of the Areopagus.

The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

[4 : 37] And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God and perhaps find their way toward him and find him.

yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being.

As even some of your own poets have said, for we are indeed his offspring. Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

Now we come to the beginning of the text that we'll focus on this morning. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.

Because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed. And of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

[6 : 12] Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, but others said, we will hear you again about this. So Paul went out from their midst, but some men joined him and believed.

Among whom were Dionysius, the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them. Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you this morning that Christ is indeed risen. And Lord, we thank you that the resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entirety of Adam's race.

Lord, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, you have communicated in your word to future events that await us all.

And so Lord, I do pray this morning that you would give us all ears to hear and to heed your word concerning these two great realities, these two implications of the Savior's resurrection.

[7 : 36] I pray all over this room this morning, Lord, that you would give us focused hearts. Would you remove distractions from us? And Lord, by the power of your Holy Spirit, would you grant us illumination in your word?

Father, I ask for much grace to care for these who are gathered here this morning, those of you purchased by your own blood. And I pray, Lord, especially for those who stand outside of Jesus Christ this morning.

Father, would you cause the gospel to be proclaimed and clearly heard. And God, would you bring men, women, boys and girls to yourself.

In Jesus' name, Amen. In this passage before us, I saw some sobering words that the Apostle Paul spoke to a group of philosophers.

And these philosophers preoccupied themselves. Thank you, Brother C. They preoccupied themselves. Can I have some tissue, please? This one is out. Oh, great.

[8 : 45] Thanks. These philosophers preoccupied themselves with telling and hearing new philosophies and beliefs.

And so, Paul's hearers were intrigued by what he said to them about the resurrection of the dead and some even mocked what he said. And the truth is, they're not alone in their mocking.

There are many this morning and even as this weekend approached who mocked the idea that people believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and that his resurrection means something.

but the apostle Paul, without debating the issue with these philosophers, he states in a very clear and sober manner that through Christ's resurrection, God assures us that there will be a day of accountability for how we live now.

Paul doesn't debate them. he doesn't engage them but he says to them, in essence, through Christ's resurrection, God assures us that there will be a day of accountability for how we live now.

[10 : 11] And in truth, not only does he assure us of this, he assures everyone of this. He assures everyone everywhere of this particular truth.

There will be a day of future accountability for how we live our lives. As Paul spoke to the group of philosophers gathered before him, he addressed two important implications of Christ's resurrection and in our remaining time this morning, I want to consider each one of them.

The first implication of Christ's resurrection that Paul addressed is this. resurrection of the dead. Now, it's interesting to note that the apostle Paul does not exactly or in exact words say that there's going to be a future resurrection of the dead.

He doesn't explicitly say that. But his audience understood him to be saying that and they were correct in their understanding. Paul was clearly pointing to the resurrection of the dead because he said that God was going to judge the world.

He was going to judge the entire world. And if God is going to judge the entire world, the only way that he can judge the entire world is to raise people from the dead from Adam up to the very last human being who would have died before Jesus returned.

[11 : 41] So Paul implied by his words that there will be a resurrection of the dead because there's going to be this judgment. So the philosophers understood that Paul was teaching about the resurrection of the dead.

He was not just talking about a man who raised from the dead because I imagine some people could say well yeah maybe under some circumstances you could think maybe he was dead and he wasn't dead and he came back but no.

Paul was talking about a general resurrection from the dead and they laughed at him. It's important to see the universal reach of what the apostle Paul is addressing.

What he says to them in verses 30 and 31. Look at it again. The times of ignorance God overlooked but now he commands all people everywhere to repent because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he is appointed and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

Paul says God calls everyone everywhere to repent. And he says in verse 31 that God gives notice, God gives assurance to everyone that he will judge the world.

[13 : 08] God will judge God and God will judge God and the philosophers before Paul knew exactly what he was saying.

And it was a shocking idea to them. So shocking that they felt it was okay to just openly mock and scorn what Paul was actually saying to them.

It was so foreign to them, they openly mocked. They didn't just disagree, they actually mocked.

And when we really think about it, the response of the mockers is not altogether surprising. There were some in the church at that time who didn't believe in the resurrection as well.

You would notice in verse 1 of Acts 18, it says, after this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. Corinth is one of the churches that Paul established and what we see is later on in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, sorry, there's this very insightful discussion that the Apostle Paul has in his letter to the church at Corinth where he discusses the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and he also talks about the resurrection from the dead in general.

[14 : 35] And the Apostle Paul, he begins by affirming that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is part of the gospel. He affirms that Jesus Christ died and was buried and was raised and he goes on to say that Christ appeared to many people, the majority of whom was still alive at the time of his writing.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that the gospel of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection was the gospel he had preached to them. It was the gospel that they believed and it was the gospel on which they had taken their stand.

And he also tells them that the gospel that he preached was the same gospel that the other apostles preached. And then Paul transitions and he begins to address a very startling issue.

There were some in the Corinthian church who believed that Christ raised from the dead but they did not believe that there was a resurrection of the dead. They affirmed that Jesus Christ himself resurrected but they did not believe that there would be a future resurrection of all the dead.

So Paul goes on to show them that it is inconsistent on the one hand to believe that Christ arose from the dead but that they and others who would die before Christ returns would not rise from the dead.

[16 : 02] So it wasn't surprising the way these philosophers reacted to what Paul said. There were some in the church who also had the particular view that when you're dead that's it.

There's nothing else that you have to look forward to. Now why is this so important? Why is this issue of the resurrection, this doctrine of the resurrection so important and why is it that some people dismiss it?

Why is it that some people scoff from the idea that there's going to be a resurrection of the dead? I think the reason is simple.

People who are living in rebellion to God hate the idea of a future resurrection resurrection because a future resurrection points to future accountability.

It points to the fact that one day God will hold all people accountable for their lives and he will raise them from the dead in order to do so.

[17 : 14] And so people who are living in rebellion to God they do what the apostle Paul talks about in Romans 1.18 where he says they suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

They suppress the truth because they do not want to believe that there is a day of accountability. There are some who verbalize this and there are some who do not verbalize it.

Those who do not verbalize it would not say there is no future resurrection but their lives say it. They live their lives without regard without any sense that one day they will stand before the holy God of the universe and give an account for their lives.

And so friends as we are gathered on this resurrection Sunday we need to think about whether our lives are being lived mindful of the truth that Christ's resurrection assures us that the dead will be raised and that the issue is accountability.

And you see this matters for us this morning because what we believe determines how we behave. Or to put it another way how we live reflects what we really believe.

[18 : 38] At the end of this argument that we find in 1 Corinthians 15 where the apostle Paul is arguing to tell the Corinthians that there will be a resurrection.

Paul sees where the idea that there is no resurrection would lead. And he says to them, he says listen, he says if there is no resurrection of the dead, why would I be risking my life to preach the gospel?

If what I'm doing now really doesn't matter, it will have no effect in the end, why am I risking my life to preach the gospel?

And he says something else to them. In 1 Corinthians 15, 32, he says to them, if the dead are not raised, then let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.

Are you able to see the mindset of those who believe when you're dead, you're done? Paul says when you believe that, what you will do is you will live for the moment. You'll have no regard for the future, you'll say, look, just get all of the joy and the fun out of life right now because when you're dead, you're done.

[19 : 49] There's nothing to look forward to. What Paul is saying is what we believe now and in particular about the future will determine how we live our lives.

And so this is a very important doctrine for us to remember this morning, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ and what we believe about it will determine how we live our lives now.

It will shape decisions that we make. And brothers and sisters, this is an unshaking, unchanging truth in scripture. The witness of scripture tells us that there will be a general resurrection of all those who die before Jesus Christ returns.

And clearly not everyone will die, but some will be alive, but the reality is that all of Adam's race, dead or alive, will be accountable for their lives.

So why would they be resurrected? And I've already alluded to this, but some believe that they will be resurrected because they're going to be reincarnated and they will have another chance to live life and to do better than they did the last time.

[21 : 06] That's what the Hindus teach. That you don't have to worry about if this life doesn't go so well. You've got another chance in another body in another lifetime.

But scripture doesn't teach that. Scripture teaches that the dead will be resurrected in order to be judged. And this brings me to the second implication of Christ's resurrection, the judgment of the world.

the first implication, the resurrection of the dead. The second, the judgment of the world. This is the reason the dead will be raised.

The dead will be raised so that together with those who did not die, we all will stand before God to be judged. And what we see in verse 31 is the apostle Paul tells us three important things about this judgment.

First, he tells us that God has fixed the day. Notice how he says that in verse 31. Because he has fixed the day on which he will judge the world.

[22 : 18] Now, even though we don't know the day, what scripture says is the day has already been fixed. The day of judgment, brothers and sisters, has already been fixed.

God, who cannot lie, has told us in his inspired word through the apostle Paul that the day of judgment, that the day of future accountability for our lives, the day we will stand before the judge of the universe, that day, friends, has been fixed.

And brothers and sisters, if this is not true, we can't trust anything else in this book. But this is as true as anything else. That day is a day of certainty. That day has been fixed.

And he also tells us the nature of the judgment. He tells us that there will be a judgment in righteousness, meaning that it is going to be a righteous judgment. It will be a perfect judgment.

There will be nothing that will fall through the cracks. There will be nothing that falls by the wayside. We will give an account to God, but that accounting will be done through the judge whom God has appointed.

- [23 : 26] And that's the second thing that the apostle Paul tells us about this judgment. He says that God has appointed the judge. He's appointed the judge through whom he will judge the world.

And at first all Paul says is the judge is a man. He says God has appointed a man. But who is this man?

Is it some random person that he just selected and said, well, you'll be the judge? judge? No, he's no ordinary man. Paul identifies who he's telling us about by the third bit of information about this coming judgment.

He tells us that God has given us assurance of the coming judgment by raising from the dead the man he has appointed to judge.

So Paul identifies who the man is. He says God raised him from the dead. Now, Paul doesn't call the name of Jesus. He does not identify by name that Jesus is this man who God raised from the dead.

- [24 : 34] And perhaps the reason he didn't do that was he wanted these philosophers to investigate. I don't know. But he didn't say it to them. But the apostle Paul is referring to Jesus Christ of Nazareth whose resurrection we celebrate today.

God raised him from the dead and by doing so he gave assurance to all that there will be a future resurrection of the dead and a judgment of the world.

And so he commands all men everywhere to repent. So Paul tells us God is fixed today. He has appointed a judge and he has given assurance to all of this coming judgment.

judgment. And so friends the resurrection of Jesus is more than just a doctrine that is believed by Christians.

It is more than just a doctrine that should interest us this morning. It is a truth that should interest everyone because God puts the entire world on notice.

- [25 : 43] He puts everyone everywhere on notice that there is coming a judgment and he is appointed one to execute that judgment.

It is a judgment of all people everywhere. It is a judgment of the entirety of Adam's race and no person is exempt. It is a judgment that is not based on goodness, that is not based on reputation or education or wealth or contributions to society.

No, verse 31 says it is a judgment that is based on righteousness. And so we will be judged for the entirety of our lives.

Every deed, every thought, every word, every motivation, every desire, God will bring in to judgment. And if God doesn't do that, it will be a defect in his nature and in his character and the judgment itself.

It will be a perfect judgment so it will be a comprehensive judgment and not a single aspect of our lives will be exempt from that judgment.

- [26 : 57] Listen to how the writer to the Hebrews writes about the one who will judge us. He says in Hebrews 4 verse 13, this is a judge who will sit in a court on Tuesday morning and who will hear testimonies, some of which may not be true, some of which may not be complete.

No, this is a judge whom the scriptures say no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.

And so here's the question that we all need to consider this morning, all of us need to consider this. Can I pass such a judgment? Can I pass a judgment before the God of the universe who knows me through and through?

And even things I have forgotten he knows and will remember. Can I pass such a judgment? All my deeds, all my words, all my thoughts, all my motivations, all my desires, and the question is, have they been righteous for the entirety of our lives?

And I think the truth is, if we're honest with ourselves, we'd all have to say no. We'd all have to say no, that we could not pass this judgment before this one whom the writer to the Hebrews describes.

[28 : 58] And so you may ask, well then what's the point? If nobody can pass the judgment, why even judge? What's the whole point? Just to shame us? Just to send us away to say we could not make the grave?

No. That's not why. If God was interested in simply condemning the entire human race, if God was interested in simply showing us how we come short, he would not in any way call us to repent.

If that was his interest, if he simply wanted to bring the entire world into condemnation, he would not call us to repent.

But that's exactly what he does. Look at what it says again in Acts 17 verses 30 and 31. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent because he has fixed the day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

because God does not want to condemn the world. He commands all people to repent. If he wants to condemn us, he can simply condemn us.

[30 : 29] But in his mercy, he warns us, and in his mercy, he calls us to repent. This is an expression of God's mercy. We have all sinned, and we have all rebelled against God, and our sins and our rebellion are deserving of death.

But this command to repent is an expression of God's mercy. So here's what we know in advance about the judgment.

We know that no human being in and of him or herself will be able to pass the judgment. We know that. The only ones who will pass the judgment are those who heed God's command to repent.

those are the only ones who will pass that judgment. And what does it mean to repent? It means to have godly sorrow. It means to grieve over our sin.

It means to turn from sin and to turn to God through Jesus Christ. sin. It means to cease to pursue and to find pleasure in sin.

[31 : 44] It also means to recognize that in and of ourselves we don't stand a chance of passing Christ's judgment. And I think if we think about this some this morning we'd really see that even to be to this place where we have godly sorrow over our sin.

Where we cease to pursue sin and find pleasure in sin. That in itself would be a work of grace in our hearts to change our hearts from that which we naturally love and desire to pursue.

We can think of times when we have sinned and we have enjoyed our sin and we are ready to sin again. And so this is not something we can just conjure up and decide to change.

This is something that only God himself is able to work and do in our hearts. To pass this judgment we need a perfect righteousness.

And the good news this morning is that the perfect righteousness that we need comes from the very one who has been appointed to judge us. The very one whom God has appointed to be the judge, he is also the one who is the source of the righteousness that we need.

[33 : 08] And God made it possible through his crucifixion and through his resurrection. The death that Jesus Christ died on the cross was a substitutionary death.

Meaning that it wasn't a death that he died for himself, but it was a death that he died on the part of others, on behalf of others. He took our sins upon himself, he bore God's punishment for those sins, so that we could receive his righteousness.

Theologians call this the great exchange. The great exchange is that Christ took the sins of sinners, so that sinners can receive the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

And as the great reformer Martin Luther says, it is an alien righteousness, righteousness, it is a righteousness that is outside of ourselves. We aren't righteous in and of ourselves, but we are righteous because this righteousness of Jesus Christ has been imputed to us, has been given to us, not imparted to us.

It doesn't make us righteous in and of ourselves, but it causes us to be declared righteous. And this is one of the wonders and the beauties of the gospel, that God is able to say to the ungodly, you are righteous.

[34 : 23] Not because you're righteous in and of yourself, but you're righteous because of the great exchange of my son. He took your sin and gives you his righteousness.

Our Savior is also our judge. The one seated on the throne will be fulfilling two critical roles. He was Savior hanging on the cross and then he will be judge seated on the throne.

again, people in Paul's day mocked because they rejected the idea that they are accountable before God and that they will answer to him for how they live their lives.

But friends, this is really logical. This should make sense that we should expect to be accountable for our lives. The Apostle Paul addresses this in a part that we read earlier in verses 24 and 25 of Acts 17.

He says, the God who made the world and everything in it being Lord of heaven and earth does not dwell in temples made by man nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

[35 : 54] So God created us. He gives us life and breath and everything. It is logical that those should be returned back to him in terms of how we live.

We should be living for him. We should be living for his glory. And so it is logical that we are accountable to him whether we live or whether we die.

And so as we consider these things this morning, I believe the most important question that I can ask you, all of you who gather here this morning, is are you ready to stand before this judge of the world?

This judge who was savior when he died and this judge who will judge in righteousness when he sits on the throne.

Are you ready this morning to stand before this judge? And about this question we need to think about it soberly. If you are in Jesus Christ this morning, you have already been judged for your sins in Jesus Christ.

[37 : 09] When Jesus hung on the cross, Jesus absorbed the punishment and the judgment for our sins. If God, when we stand before him, or even to put it more exactly, we stand before the one whom God has appointed, the man Jesus Christ, the one who took our sins on his own back and bore them on the cross, if he were to raise those sins again to us and call us to give an account for those sins, that would be a travesty of justice.

That would be God requiring payment two times. That would be God requiring payment on the back of Jesus Christ. And then God requiring payment from us as well.

But when Jesus said it is finished, it was finished. So though we will be judged, we will not be judged for those sins. Those sins will not be spoken to us to give an account for those sins.

Scripture does tell us though that we will be rewarded according to our works. And that's a gracious expression of God's kindness to reward us for works that he enables us to do, to reward us for good works in particular that he enables us to do.

And I say that this morning because I realize that when we hear that we will be judged for every thought and every deed and every motivation and every desire, even as Christians, that is a very, very weighty thought to consider.

[38 : 45] And we can sometimes forget, you know what, though I could think of many evil thoughts sins and many evil deeds and many sins that I've committed that I'm ashamed about, I don't have to let those burden me because they have been born by Jesus Christ.

And so as you consider this question this morning, whether you are ready to stand before that judgment, don't allow that to depress you and to debilitate you because those sins have been born.

The good news this morning is that if you are in Jesus Christ, you are ready to face a judgment where you will not hear condemnation, where you will not hear rejection, where you will not hear against sins mentioned that Christ has born.

But if you hear this morning and you have not yet trusted in Jesus Christ, in essence, what you're saying is this, I will bear my own sins. Sin will be punished in one of two places.

Sin will be punished on the back of Jesus Christ on the cross or sin will be punished on our own backs in eternity in hell. God commands all men everywhere to repent so that they could stand in the good of the purchase of Jesus Christ, the purchase of forgiveness, the purchase of redemption, the purchase of the debt being paid.

[40 : 17] We can stand in the good of all of that. But when we don't repent, when we don't accept that, what we're saying is, I'll pay for my own sins. Maybe not verbally, but by not repenting, that is what we're actually saying.

there are people who would mock this morning these words that I proclaim to you. And there were some who mocked Paul.

But there were some who didn't mock, they just said, you know, we'll hear you another time. And I wonder, for those who may not be mocking this morning, you know you're outside of Jesus Christ, what are you saying?

Why are you deferring it? Why are you thinking that maybe I'll do this at another time, at a more convenient time in my life? Time that you don't have with any certainty.

There were some who heard Paul, and what we see is they believed. look at verse 34, it says, but some men joined him and believed, among whom were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

[41 : 49] It's going to be your decision this morning. You're here, so I would say clearly you're not mocking, but will you defer as some did?

or will you believe? And join the company of countless others who have believed that Jesus not only died for our sins, but he also raised from the dead.

God, and God through him gives assurance that there's coming a day of accountability for all of us, where we will stand before him and we will give account for our short lives.

I pray this morning that you who are away from Jesus Christ will respond, that you respond in faith, that you respond in belief, that you would repent and you would say, Lord, I accept the death of Jesus Christ, the punishment that he took on his back for the sins of sinners.

Lord, I confess that I'm one of those sinners for whom he died. And what scripture says is all who come to God, he will not turn away.

[43 : 06] And so my prayer for you is that you would do that even before you leave this place today. Let's pray together.