

Resurrection

Sermon #0912

Study given by W. D. Frazee—May 12, 1962

I am glad for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. At this season of the year, when all nature gives evidence of a resurgence of life, we can rejoice in the fact that all of this is made possible through the resurrection of our Lord.

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" 1 Thessalonians 4:14.

The resurrection of Christ is the pledge of those who sleep in Christ. Paul tells us that unless Jesus had risen from the dead, those which are fallen asleep in Christ would perish (1 Corinthians 15:18). So on the resurrection of Christ hinges our hope of resurrection.

I would like to have us think of the resurrection not merely as a pledge of our future life, but as the power of the Christian's present life. Notice:

"Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" Romans 6:4, 5.

The resurrection then is the power not merely of the future life but the present life of the Christian. It is because of the resurrection that the Christian has power to meet the temptations of Satan, and to live the life of Jesus here on earth. We hear Paul expressing in his letter to the Philippians:

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" Philippians 3:10.

Do we have to wait until Christ returns in glory and opens the graves to know the power of that resurrection? No. Day by day the Christian is to experience in his own life that power, lifting him above dead works to serve the living God. Notice how Paul pinpoints it on this point also of the resurrection being necessary for victory in our present life:

"For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" 1 Corinthians 15:16, 17.

Where would the Christian be if Christ had not been raised? Yet in our sins. Oh, is it really true? As surely as the tomb is locked and bolted and forever closed. Unless Jesus rose from the dead, every sinner is dead forever in trespasses and sins.

That is the Gospel. And that is why it is so vital that we should think of Jesus not merely as one who died for us, but as one who rose for us.

I would like to have us think of the three great lines of evidence that establish this fact beyond any question; three great lines of evidence that make it absolutely certain that Jesus of Nazareth, the One who died on Calvary, rose from the grave and has ascended to the Father's throne.

In a court of law in this world great reliance is had upon the testimony of witnesses. That is the way certain facts are established. Those who have seen or heard certain things are brought into court. They are asked questions. They relate their experience. They are cross examined. Upon their testimony the jury decides that which is to be decided.

In this question, all the world is the jury, therefore all the world should hear the witnesses. We find that when Jesus sent His disciples out into the world, He sent them out to be just that.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me" Acts 1:8.

I would like to observe how that expression is used over and over, and how that experience is being carried out over and over.

We have seen that Christ told them they would be witnesses. We see them doing just that. Notice the first sermon preached by Peter in Jerusalem. What is the point of it? The resurrection of Christ. He speaks of Jesus, refers to His life among them, and His death, and then says:

"Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" Acts 2:24.

He quotes from Scripture, and says:

"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses" verse 32.

Why did Peter say they are all witnesses of this? Had they seen Jesus crucified? Yes. Had they seen Him after He came from the grave? Again and again.

"To whom also He shewed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days,

and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" Acts 1:3.

Through those forty days from the resurrection to the ascension Christ appeared to His disciples, now in Jerusalem, now in Galilee, and in other places, and spoke and talked and ate with them. Thus they became thoroughly and fully and eternally established in the fact of the resurrection. So now they are witnesses.

"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him" Acts 5:30-32.

As soon as the Spirit of God came upon these men they began to witness to the death and burial and resurrection of Jesus. That was the power of the early church. Thousands were converted in a few days as Peter and the other apostles gave witness that they had seen and heard the risen Christ.

We see how Paul emphasizes the basic character of the truth of the resurrection, and establishes it by these witnesses:

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.

He piles up evidence one after the other of individuals and groups who saw Jesus. They knew it was Him.

Christ Himself sought to establish this in the minds of His disciples. Each one of the Gospel writers not only mentions but highlights the witnesses who saw the risen Christ. It is presented as the great climax of Matthew's Gospel, Mark's account, Luke's record, and John's testimony.

You are familiar with the wonderful story as given by the gospel writers of the coming down of the angel and rolling away the stone and summoning the Son of God. The fear and terror of the Roman guard and their fleeing away with their testimony. The women coming to the tomb and finding it empty, seeing the angels, and going to the disciples with their testimony. Peter and John coming and seeing the empty tomb and going back and telling the other disciples. Jesus walking with those two on the road to Emmaus, opening to them the Scriptures, and known to

them in breaking bread. His appearance with the eleven in the upper room. All those things are familiar parts of a wonderful story.

I would like to have you notice Luke's account. Luke was a physician. From place to place in the book of Luke we notice the interest he had in the physical things that took place in the ministry of Jesus. Luke records a great many of the miracles of Christ that had to do with the physical body. And in this account of the resurrection it is interesting how Luke highlights and emphasizes the evidences that it was the real Jesus who came forth from the grave. We see Jesus standing before the disciples in the upper room:

"Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit" Luke 24:37.

Their testimony later is strengthened by the fact that during the early hours of the news of His resurrection they were inclined to doubt rather than believe. They had to be convinced. They believed that He was dead, and they never expected to see Him again. As they saw Jesus there in the upper room they thought it could not be Him. They thought it must be some ghost.

"And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have. And when He had thus spoken, He shewed them His hands and His feet. While they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb" Luke 24:38-42.

Jesus wanted to convince them that He was the same Jesus who had died. It was the same blessed Jesus they had known, who had walked with them many times back and forth on those dusty roads. It was the same Jesus who had lived with them. Now here He was having come from the tomb. The same Jesus. I am glad He is going to be the same when we see Him again.

There are other witnesses, but thank God for the dozens and hundreds of witnesses that Christ arranged to see and hear and even feel Him after His resurrection.

When Thomas heard the other disciples tell the story, he said they could believe if they wanted to, but he would not believe. He would not believe unless he could put his hand where the spear was thrust into Christ's side and where the nails went into His hands. John tells us that story in John 20.

A week later Jesus appearing again to the disciples with Thomas present. He said to Thomas, come here. See these marks? See this scar? Come with your hand and finger. Here is the evidence you asked for. What did Thomas say? "My

Lord and my God" John 20:28. Jesus gently reproved him. Thomas, you believe because you have seen, but blessed are they that have not seen, yet believe.

If everybody in the world had adopted Thomas' attitude very few would have accepted the Gospel. You can see that. God arranged for a sufficient number of witnesses to convince all who were willing to be convinced. But as in everything else that God does, He has left room for those who wish to doubt.

God will not make a man believe any more than He will make him obey. He leaves the reason free, the conscience free. But thank God, here are witnesses who saw Jesus. Everyone of those men, with few exceptions, witnessed their testimony with their life. They died as martyrs rather than give up their testimony.

James was beheaded. Peter was crucified with his head downward. One after the other of these witnesses were beheaded or crucified or martyred in some way rather than change their testimony that the Jesus whom they had know as teacher was also their risen Lord.

Peter was one of these eye witnesses. He says there is something stronger, something more weighty than the testimony of eye witnesses:

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy" 2 Peter 1:16-19.

Peter, do you mean to say there is something more sure than your testimony as an eye witness? That's right. It is the word of prophecy. Does prophecy have anything to do with the life and death and resurrection of Jesus? Oh, yes. To Him all the prophets give witness. Thank God.

That brings us to this great line of evidence. Jesus Christ in His birth, His life, His death, His burial, His resurrection, and His ascension, fulfilled the prophecies of Old Testament Scripture. This was emphasized by Christ Himself and by the gospel writers. We were observing a moment ago how the physical proofs of the resurrection of Jesus were emphasized. But the great point is the example of Jesus in using the Old Testament Scriptures to prove that He was indeed the promised Messiah.

Christ chose to conceal His identity as He walked with those two men on the road to Emmaus. The reason is apparent. If they had known He was indeed the risen Christ, they wouldn't have had time to listen to the Word. They would have been so happy seeing Him they would not have needed any evidence.

Christ, in His great wisdom, chose to conceal who He was. He asked them what they were talking about. They said they were talking about Jesus of Nazareth and how He had been taken and crucified. They thought He was still dead. They said they trusted it was Christ which should have redeemed Israel. They told about the women who told the story of seeing some angels who said He was alive, but they didn't see Him.

"Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself" Luke 24:25-27.

Wasn't that a wonderful Bible study? Wouldn't you like to have a tape recording of that? Jesus taking the Old Testament Scriptures and pointed out the predictions which had already been fulfilled in His birth, His life, His life, and His resurrection. And the more they listened the more their hearts burned within them as He opened to them the Scriptures.

"And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures?" Luke 24:32.

Oh friends, God make us students of prophecy as Jesus taught His disciples to be. God give us the sense that here we have proof greater than the testimony of any eye witness, or all the eye witnesses in the world put together. Men may give false witness at times. They may purger themselves, or they may be deceived. But the evidence of fulfilled prophecy is something the Devil cannot counterfeit. The mind of man cannot reach to that wonderful wisdom that looks down through the ages and for millenniums in advance foretells what is to come.

Micah foretold Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. Isaiah foretold He would be born of a virgin. Daniel foretold the very time when He would appear and be anointed. And Isaiah foretold His vicarious death for the sins of men. His vision of the suffering Servant in Isaiah 53 has earned for him the title of the gospel prophet. And well he was.

But was there anything in those prophecies concerning the resurrection of Christ? Yes. It was not only His birth and life and death, but His resurrection that was the theme of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Jesus is telling His disciples in the upper room that all things must be fulfilled that are written in the law of Moses and the prophets. Notice how Peter was taught by Christ:

"And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me.

Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" Luke 24:44, 45.

Peter, taught by Christ how to understand the Old Testament Scriptures, proceeds fifty days later to use fulfilled prophecy as one of the great evidences that Jesus is Lord and Christ.

We have noticed how Peter brings in their own testimony as witnesses. But notice that he brings their personal testimony as eye witnesses to agree with the great leading testimony of the Word of God. He introduces first the prediction from Scripture that tells of the resurrection of Christ. He begins speaking of Jesus and His life, His death, and His resurrection (Acts 2:22-24). Now watch:

"For David speaketh concerning Him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; Thou shalt make me full of joy with Thy countenance" Acts 2:25:28.

David wrote the Psalms. That was one of the books that Jesus referred to after the resurrection. So Peter has it fresh in his mind. What Psalm is Peter quoting from? The 16th Psalm. Now watch as Peter comments on it:

"Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on His throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses" Acts 2:29-32.

Who did Peter say David was talking about? Jesus. He proved it. He told how David said His soul was not left in the grave, neither did His flesh see corruption. But did David's flesh see corruption? Sure. Peter said his sepulcher is still with us after a thousand years, "For David is not ascended into the heavens" verse 34.

David was not talking about himself. He saw a vision of the Savior, and speaking prophetically he wrote that Jesus' soul would not be left in the grave, nor His flesh see corruption.

Do you see how Peter is urging upon the Jews the testimony of fulfilled prophecy? Follow it through the book of Acts. Follow it through the writings of the apostle Paul. Over and over again we see that was the power of the early church.

That power was the presentation of the fulfillment of prophecy and the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, confirmed by the testimony of these eye witnesses who had seen Him live and die, and had seen Him after His resurrection.

We have seen what the first two lines of evidence of the resurrection are—the evidence of the fulfillment of prophecy in the life and death of Christ, and the evidence of those eye witnesses. But friends, there is an evidence that is left for each one of us to experience.

David said, "Oh taste and see." There are some things that there is no other way to prove than that.

Years ago in London an infidel was speaking against the Bible and the religion of Christ. He went on for some time. He finally gave opportunity for questions. An old man made his way through the audience toward the platform. He stood there and looked up at the infidel. He didn't say anything. He took an orange he had in his pocket and peeled it and ate a piece of it. Everyone wondered what was happening.

Finally he looked up at the infidel and said, "Is that orange I am eating sweet or sour?"

The infidel, being rather rough said, "You old fool, how should I know?"

The old man said, "That's your problem. You are talking about something you have never tasted. But I have, and I know."

There is an evidence God wants to give every one of us. The risen Christ longs to live within each heart:

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" Revelation 3:20.

The same risen Christ that walked the road to Emmaus with those two disciples, who opened to them the Scriptures, and was known of them in the breaking of bread, longs to come into the heart of each of us and sup with us. We too shall know Him.

Precious Lord, we thank Thee for the testimony of the eye witnesses, of Peter and John and James, and all those who witnessed and were martyrs to their faith in the One they had seen and known. We thank Thee for the still greater evidence of fulfilled prophecy, these marvelous predictions that confirm our faith that Jesus is Thy Son and our Lord. We thank Thee most of all for Thy precious presence in our hearts and lives. And if there be one this morning in Divine presence that has not known the sweets of Divine love, we pray that just now he shall hear the knock and open the door and receive the risen Christ. For His sake. Amen.

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