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The Urgency Of The Gospel

Before we race into a discussion of the resurrection I want to be sure that we understand the difference between three words; angel, resuscitation and resurrection. These are words that if you're not careful you won't read Scripture right in certain areas, and people tend to be sloppy, so let's clarify vocabulary a moment.

The first thing about resurrection is that it's not becoming an angel. No person has ever become an angel. Angels are different. Angels have what we would call a spirit body. They do not have a physical body as in resurrection. Now, temporarily angels can manifest themselves in physical bodies. Apparently they showed up and ate steak with Abraham; two angels moved the stone that covered the tomb in the NT, one about knocked Peter's block off in prison. So evidently they can temporarily materialize and interact with the material universe. Angels are ministering spirits, but angels are not the same as resurrection. Another capability angels have is the ability to morph into flames of fire or wind, and be God's messengers; apparently God gave the Law at Mt Sinai through angels who appeared as flames of fire. So angels can appear as men and they can also morph and appear as fire. Angels have a strange transformation ability. But generally speaking they have what we call a spirit body. So be careful not to think of the resurrection body as an angelic spirit. That was the issue with doubting Thomas. He thought what the other apostles saw was just Jesus' spirit, like when Elijah and Moses showed up with Jesus at the Mt of Transfiguration. They didn't have physical bodies, but they were clothed; they appeared in some kind of intermediate spirit body. That's not the resurrection body. That's a spirit body that departed people have until the resurrection. But in the resurrection the body has physical mass, it can be touched, a spirit body doesn't have physical mass, can't be touched, etc...but the resurrection body can.

The second thing about resurrection is it's not resuscitation. Resuscitation is the idea of CPR, that we restore breath to the present body but that body will die again. That would be an example in 1 Kgs 17 with the widow of Zarephath. Her son died and Elijah prayed and his breath returned to him. Another example would be in Acts 20 when Paul taught the word of God all night long and a man named Eutychus fell out of the second story window and died; Paul laid down on him and his life returned. These are resuscitations, not resurrections. They may be foreshadowings of resurrection, they may illustrate some things about resurrection, but they are not resurrections. They are miracles and they demonstrate God's power over life and death, just like the resurrection is a miracle, but they are not resurrections. The point of resuscitation is that the person would eventually die again because the resuscitated body is still a mortal human body, miraculously changed, and the spirit reunited to the body, but nonetheless mortal. The resurrection body is not mortal.

The third thing is the resurrection body and the Scriptures assert that resurrection is not a spirit body like an angel or a resuscitated body like Eutychus, but rather it's a transformation of the present mortal body into an immortal body. The Scriptures assert this has already occurred in history, and it wasn't Muhammad, it wasn't Confucius, it wasn't Joseph Smith, it was the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only resurrected individual ever in the history of the world. That's one of the uniqueness's of Christianity. We follow a risen savior not a dead religious leader. And in that resurrection His body was transformed, the same body that was crucified on the cross to satisfy God's justice, the same body that was laid in the tomb. That body was transformed so that the body was not there but the head-covering was there all neatly folded to demonstrate that when He rose he had time, enough time to neatly fold the napkin and walk out. So when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to doubting Thomas, Thomas could touch Him. Thomas could feel Him. We would say scientifically today His resurrection body had mass that weighed something, it took up space. He went around eating and drinking to demonstrate that He was not a spirit but a physical body. So the resurrection body can eat food and drink water. Yet it also had new abilities, it could eat food and drink water but it didn't require it. It could appear and be touched but it could also disappear, it could pass through walls. So it has similarities to the present body but it also had differences. We don't really know its

biology, chemistry and physics, the resurrection body is a new thing, it never happened in history before the Lord Jesus Christ; but it's scheduled to happen again. But what exactly the new body is like nobody knows; nobody's done a chemical analysis, nobody's done a physical analysis, nobody's done a biological analysis of a resurrection body. The resurrection body is a black box so far as it's composition. But at least what is known about it is that it's open to empirical perception by all our present senses. And most importantly it's indestructible.

So angelic spirits, resuscitation and resurrection; those are three vocabulary words, we're talking about resurrection. The Bible asserts that resurrection happened, it was observed empirically; Jesus walked around showing Himself alive by many infallible proofs for a period of 40 days, 40 days of interaction between immortal and mortal.

Now let's turn to 1 Cor 15. 1 Cor 15 is the central passage on resurrection in the NT. When you have an event like the resurrection it has to be interpreted in the biblical frame of reference. So you have an isolated event, in this case the resurrection, but that resurrection is itself interpreted inside a context of Scripture, it's not to be interpreted as an isolated piece of a puzzle. If you look at it all by itself and interpret it you'll draw your own conclusions and misinterpret it. That's not how history works. And that's what Paul is pointing out in verse 3, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins *according to the Scriptures*,⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day *according to the Scriptures*," Notice Paul says, before we talk about the resurrection we talk about the prior historical context; He died and rose again "according to the Scriptures." What Scriptures? The OT, that's all they had at the time, he says that's where the story of resurrection starts, it doesn't start with Jesus, it start with the OT and from there we envelop the resurrection and interpret it inside that frame of reference. So let's look at the OT. What did the OT teach about resurrection?

There are three explicit passages in the OT that teach resurrection. The first one is Job 19:25. There are several texts that imply it; we're just looking at the explicit texts. Job is written early, just after the Flood, it's the earliest book written in the OT and it's clear that very early on in history resurrection was understood. "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last

He will take His stand on the earth. ²⁶“Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God; ²⁷Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes will see and not another.” In verse 26, “from my flesh I shall see God.” Not spirit, flesh. Verse 27, “whom my eyes will see.” The resurrection body has eyeballs, it can see. Job held that at the last, observe the timing, at the last day, so this is at the end of history, the resurrection is conceived of as occurring at the very end. That’s a key observation that sets you up for the meaning of resurrection when it occurs in Christ.

The second one is Isa 26:19. And Isaiah writes to a generation that is living in dark times, they need hope, everything was collapsing around them so he makes this statement in verse 19, he says “Your dead will live; their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, for your dew is as the dew of the dawn, and the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.” So again, a very strong resurrection verse, corpses will rise out of the earth, and what it did was give hope to a people that were living in despair.

The third explicit passage is Dan 12:2, this is quite clear, nobody argues with this. “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.” This introduces another sobering thing that one usually doesn’t hear about when the resurrection doctrine is taught, that all men will receive resurrected bodies. That’s the destiny of all men, it’s not just believers that are resurrected, all men will receive resurrection bodies, and that’s what’s so chilling about the resurrection. We’re going to see that more and more, the resurrection is a very scary doctrine, because the resurrection says that once you’re resurrected you can’t die again. You are now forever locked in concrete, as it were, into the destiny that you have chosen. Those who have received Christ, those who have believed on Him will be resurrected unto life, because they have given up on good works and they’ve said that if I’m ever going to be pleasing to God it’s going to be because Christ’s righteousness is credited to my account. For those who have said I’m going to do it myself thank you. God will say fine, do it yourself, but you will be faced with the horror of living in a resurrected body of death, forever and ever, that can never be destroyed, but can feel pain, etc...There’s no relief in this resurrection because there’s no way to get back out of the resurrection body. That’s why it’s a horror. There’s a resurrection to life *and* a resurrection to condemnation and everyone partakes of one or the other. This is why the gospel is so tremendously

important, now is the hour of grace, now is the day of salvation, right now. There is no guarantee of tomorrow and we'll see this more and more as we go into resurrection doctrine.

So Job 19:25, the resurrection is a last days event, that gives us the timing, Isa 26:19 shows the blessing for those resurrected unto life and Dan 12:2, not only is there a resurrection unto everlasting life for those who received Christ's righteousness, but there is a resurrection unto everlasting contempt for those who reject Him. So resurrection is not new with the NT. That is all OT data that set up the framework for interpreting the NT resurrection of Christ.

Then we come to the NT and we have the first resurrection in history, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now we have a human being walking around in an immortal body, interacted with mortals, ate, drank, slept, talked, people touched Him. So what does it mean that resurrection has occurred in history? Let's look at a quote from George Eldon Ladd. Ladd captured a very powerful implication of Jesus' resurrection when he pointed out, "Jesus' resurrection is not an isolated event that gives to men the warm confidence and hope of a future resurrection;" what does he mean by that? He means there are two sides to resurrection - one side of it is confidence and hope, there is a resurrection unto life, but the other side is horror, the resurrection unto eternal damnation. He goes on, "it is the beginning of the eschatological resurrection itself." What he means is that when Christ rose from the dead it is the beginning of the end of the world as we know it. Because remember what Job said? Resurrection occurs in the last day. So if Christ is already risen from the dead then we have already entered the last day. We're not looking for the last days; the last days already began with the resurrection of Jesus. This is why there's an urgency to believe the gospel. If we think of history as a period of days, a timetable, then the end of the timetable has come. Dr Ladd goes on, "If we may use crude terms to try to describe sublime realities, we might say that a piece of the eschatological resurrection has been split off and planted in the midst of history. The first act of the drama of the Last day has taken place before the Day of the Lord." The first act of the drama, what's that? The unfolding of God's plan for history. What's God's plan for history? To divide men on the anvil of Jesus Christ. Who do you say Jesus Christ is? You better be careful how you answer that question. He is utterly unique. His claims are utterly unique. He is virgin born so He's

without sin, He was born into hypostatic union, as the eternal God took to Himself true humanity, so He's undiminished deity united with true humanity, yet He's only one person, one person with two natures, both Creator and creature, He's kenotic meaning that though He possessed all divine attributes He set aside the independent use of His divine attributes so that He knows what it is to be tempted as we are, yet he was without sin, He had no cause of death in Him. He could have lived forever, but He gave up His life on the cross to satisfy God's righteous anger against our sin. He did this for you and for me. He took our sin in His body to die for us that He might give us in exchange His life transmitted through faith, simply receiving eternal life through putting our trust in Him. He rose from the dead to demonstrate that death did not have Him. Name one religious leader that rose from the dead? Nobody ever even claimed it. Nobody else did any of the things Jesus Christ did, He is totally unique. Now who do you say that He is?

“The first act of the drama of the Last day has taken place before the Day of the Lord.” What he means there by the Last day is that there is a resurrection unto life and a resurrection unto death, all men are resurrected on one side or the other depending on how they answer the question, who do you say the Son of Man is? And Dr Ladd says the first act of this dividing of men has already occurred with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So if we have the first act, say here, in AD33 when Christ rose, then after the first act we have the intermission, this is a day of grace. Here we are in 2011 and from AD33 to AD2011 it's been a time in which men can repent, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, it's a time when men can still change sides. But this time will come to an end and the second act of the drama will unfold. When the day of grace is over and the time of judgment ensues. That's what he means by the day of the Lord. It's the day when the grace opportunity is over and judgment falls. And he says the first act of that judgment has already occurred *inside* of history.

I want you to pause for a moment and just reflect that when you see the resurrection not just as an isolated event, but you see it in its cosmic setting, that the end of this universe has already begun with the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that He has inaugurated the next universe. He's the first part of the new creation, the new heavens and the new earth that's yet to come; it already exists in at least one human body right now, today, at the right hand of the Father. There's no question about whether God is going to create a

whole new world, He's already begun to create a whole new world with the resurrected Jesus Christ. He's the first brick, so to speak, of a whole new world in the making.

What kind of person will inhabit this new world? People like the resurrected God-man King and only people like the resurrected God-man King will inhabit the new world. What is the significance, then of Jesus' resurrection within Biblical thought? *It is the presence of the first piece of the new world within the world today.* ... No other religion or philosophy of history can point man to what the new world will look like. Communism, for example, makes stupendous claims of the future 'redeemed' classless society in a new world, but it cannot offer today an actual concrete example of the kind of person who will live in that society." No prototype. "Biblical Christianity alone can point to the kind of person who will live in the new world, a person like the resurrected God-man King, those who have put their trust in Him.

Turn to Acts 17. We want to show that with the resurrection of Christ a titanic shift has occurred in history. History before the resurrection and history after the resurrection are radically different. Acts 17:30-32 Paul is using the resurrection in this address to the Athenian's and he's not talking about the cross. It always fascinates me that here's a gospel presentation but no mention of the cross of Christ. And if you did this today I'm sure in a lot of evangelical circles people would say well, what a sorry gospel presentation, you never mentioned the cross. Why didn't Paul mention the cross? Think. What was the issue? Why do people not understand the cross? What's the hidden background issue of the cross? The justice of God. So if people don't understand the justice of God you can talk about the cross until you're blue in the face and there's no need for the cross if they're not clear on the justice of God. There's no need for the cross because I'm okay, you're okay, all we have to do is feel a bit sorry for what we've done, do better next time and we're going to be acceptable to God. We don't need all this bloody cross stuff.

Here Paul is going to deal, not with the cross because that's an advanced truth, but he goes to the resurrection, but resurrection is not an isolated fact. Notice how he weaves it in. Verse 30, he says, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance," i.e. the civilization that rose out of Noah, the Gentiles, "God is now declaring to men," in other words, He didn't do this before, this is new, He's declaring now to all men "that all everywhere" all

culture groups, all linguistic groups, this is a universal gospel claim...that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only way. How would a person off the streets respond to this? You can't say that. Why, everyone has their own beliefs and you shouldn't go around telling people you're beliefs are right and theirs are wrong. Well, I didn't tell them that. Jesus Christ told them that so go argue with Him. I didn't say Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life and no one, no one goes to the Father but by Him. Jesus Christ made that claim. So don't blame me, I didn't write this book, I'm just telling you what it says. If you ask me you ought to be happy there is a way. If you understand the holiness of God you understand God went to great lengths to make a way for us to get to Him. He didn't have to do that. He's not obligated to you. He's not obligated to me. He's not obligated to anyone. We're all obligated to Him and we fell short on our obligation. We stole life and we're all under capital punishment. That there's a way out, that's grace. That someone took your place in the execution chair, that's grace.

And he's condemning all cultures here, all language groups/ They've been dwelling in a time of ignorance, ever since the paganization after Noah and the tower of Babel, the whole of human civilization has suppressed the truth and fallen into ignorance, and "that all men everywhere should repent. Why? Verse 31 "because" now watch how he contextualizes the resurrection, and what is the context in which he sets the resurrection? Verse 31, "because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." What's the context of resurrection? Judgment. When does judgment occur? At the end of history. Like Job said, the last day. So what does judgment mean? It means men are accountable for their actions. It means there's going to be an evaluation. This is the ultimate evaluation. This isn't your annual job evaluation. This is your life evaluation, what did you do with the life God gave you? What did you do with Jesus Christ? Ultimate accountability. So that's the context of the resurrection.

That tips us off as to why there's a grand conspiracy in the world to cover up the resurrection. Oh, we can talk about Easter eggs all day long. There's nothing offensive about Easter eggs. What is offensive is resurrection because resurrection means that the judge at the final judgment is already raised and He's set, He's sitting on the bench and He's ready to judge. And this means that when this truth is set forth clearly it is a reminder to the human heart

that you are going to face Him. This is the unavoidable last stop on a train. The judgment is where everybody is heading; it's the end of the story. You are coming to the end of your life and you are going to have to give an accounting for your life. Oh I don't want to hear that. So what do they say? Verse 32, "Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer," see, this is the brush off crowd, they try to sweep this stuff under the carpet, oh, I don't believe that, that's ridiculous. It's just a front. It's vanity. Hot air and baloney talk. Does it make men feel better? For a time. But they know deep down they will give an account before the King of kings.

Did Paul fail in his evangelism? No. He no more failed than you do when you witness to members of your own family that are the hardest ones to witness to. You feel thwarted, you feel defeated, look at Paul. How many people of Jesus' own brothers and sisters believed on Him while He was alive? From what we can tell, the only report in the NT is they doubted Him. What's the matter; He didn't live a Christ-like life in His own family? Surely not. It was because people are blinded by their sin, the timing of the Holy Spirit and everything else that has to happen before a person can believe in Christ. The point is that when you see the resurrection in Scripture remember verse 31, it is set in the context of the end times; it is a signal that the last chapter of history is now being written.

So realize that resurrection is not welcome in society because it confronts each one of us with our future permanent state. To get the full force of what we're saying here turn to Luke 16. What we're saying is that there's a split coming in the road of humanity and when that split occurs, that is where your future is permanent. In other words, at that point you can never ever, ever, ever be changed again, no more falls and no more grace and no more gospel and no more just as I am's, permanent status quo. That's what the resurrection does. The resurrection seals the doom of the damned and it seals the security of the saved. And never shall the twain meet. It is a very sobering truth when it's considered.

I'm doing this because you'll hear all kinds of Easter sermons and it's nice and wonderful, but if you listen to them, they're always talking about the resurrection gives hope; good message, the birds and the bees and the flowers and the trees, it's an ooey, gooey resurrection gives hope message. Excuse me, but how much hope did it give the Athenians? When the resurrection was

preached in all its power, yes, it does give hope to those who want fellowship with God forever and ever, yeah. But does it give hope to those who thumb their nose at God? No, it's a message of doom, it's a message that resurrection will happen to you and once you're resurrected you're either resurrected unto life or resurrected unto damnation; and once it's happened there are no time machines, you can't go back, it's all over, it's fixed. That's very sobering to understand that, and it's that permanence, that sudden end of choice that is so scary about resurrection.

In Luke 16:19, this is one of Jesus' more startling teachings. People run around saying, well, Jesus was a nice guy, Jesus gave us some good ethics but if you really tie them down and make them read what Jesus actually taught they would be shocked. Jesus taught about heaven and hell, he talked about people burning in flames and that's not the little ethical contributor Jesus they like to talk about. Why, that's nasty talk, we can't have people running around talking about that. Jesus said that? Yes, He did. And here He said it to the Pharisees. The Pharisees loved money. They thought if a person had money that meant they were the blessed of God, super holy people, and they used a lot of gimmicks to line their pockets with money, just like a lot of religious people today. In the final analysis, when all the smoke clears, they're about the money, they're not interested in other people, they're interested in themselves and they say, it's God's blessing. Nonsense. So understand that's the background of the discussion, if your rich you'll be blessed, if you're poor, too bad for you, God is cursing you. So Jesus throws this at them. Verse 19, "Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day." This is supposedly the blessed of God, verse 20, "And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores," not the Lazarus most people know but just a common man, a poor man, a beggar, someone the Pharisees looked down their noses at, the cursed of God. Verse 22, "Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; the rich man also died and was buried. ²³In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom." He's developing a picture that was first painted in the OT of a place called Hades or Sheol. The OT picture was that when a person dies they go to this place called Sheol. Sheol is the Hebrew word for the Greek Hades, same place. And in the OT they knew that when they died they would go to Sheol. And that was a little bit concerning because Sheol means "who knows where?" They didn't know exactly where

they were going so they called it “who knows where.” Remember David prayed, “Lord, do not abandon my soul to Sheol.” He’s saying, don’t abandon my soul to who knows where, some unknown place, come and get me, I know I’ll go there but come get me, at the proper time and take me to be with You. So you had this picture of the dead in Sheol. What Jesus does is He amplifies the picture and says, now you know there are two compartments in Sheol, don’t you? Sheol has two compartments separated by a great abyss in between. On one side you have what’s called Abraham’s bosom and on that side is where everyone who had faith like Abraham is, they were justified before God through faith just like Abraham. And on the other side you have everyone who thumbed their nose at God and said phooey, I’ll do it myself. And the nice rich man is the one who said I’ll do it myself, that’s a picture of the Pharisees, self-righteous, I can do it myself types. The poor man is in Abraham’s bosom. And Jesus is threatening the Pharisees. You mean Jesus is telling them their religion is wrong? Yeah, Jesus is telling them their belief system is wrong. Jesus is interfering in people’s belief systems and the obvious truth is that Jesus believed His way was the only way. Now in the story the poor man was in Abraham’s bosom. The rich man was staring out across this great abyss and he could see the man over in Abraham’s bosom but there was no way he could get over there. See, there’s one way of salvation but after you die there’s no way, all opportunities to accept the one way are over and gone, forever. So it’s over for this rich guy and he cries out in verse 24, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame. 25But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus the bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. 26And besides all this,’ he can’t come over to you, “between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.’ In other words, no more one way of salvation, that opportunity is passed. So what verse 26 is getting at is that when you die there are no crossovers, you’ve made your choice, there are no second chances, it’s fixed, you can’t get relief, you can’t change what you did, it’s all over. So all that’s left is verse 27, “And he said, “Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father’s house—“if he can’t come over here and comfort me, do the next best thing, send him to my fathers house, verse 28, “for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ Here’s a guy who says, I know

what it's like here and you don't want to be here. Verse 29, and this is what it really boils down to, "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' You know, they have the word of God, let them go read the word of God. But he said, verse 30, "No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!" 31 But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'" What's the point? If you're not going to come to faith based on what God has stated in His word on the basis of His own person, then I can present all the empirical evidence in the world and it won't convince you at all. We can bring your dead grandma up from the grave and you could interpret it as, well, I had some bad Mexican food last night. Man is not convinced by empiricism. I could levitate right here and it wouldn't mean a thing. The red-hooded monks of Tibet could do all kinds of levitation and it didn't mean they had the way, the truth and the life. If you won't be persuaded by the Scriptures then you won't be persuaded by some experience you have. And the point is that the word of God is a more sound base for faith than your experience. The Scriptures are authoritative not your experience.

Alright, the point we've tried to make is that with the resurrection of Christ the first act of the final drama of history has already occurred, we have a resurrected human being sitting as Judge at the right hand of the Father and He is declaring to all men everywhere, all men on all continents, all men of every language, that all men believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. Because with the resurrection of Christ the end of history has come, we are in the Last day and when grace ends judgment ensues. At that point there is no crossing over, there are no second chances, you only get one shot at this. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.

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