

“The Gospel of the Resurrection” Acts 2:22-36, Jerry Arnold, April 15, 2006

I went with a group of pastors and some of them had their wives. We went to Israel on a Holy Land tour a number of years ago. We went around the country to the different places. When we were in the city of Jerusalem they took us to the temple mount area which is now the Dome of the Rock. It's a Muslim area— a very sacred place to them. They told us that we would be welcome to go up there but that the women were not allowed to wear sleeveless tops. They couldn't wear shorts, and I kind of lost track after that. My wife didn't happen to be with me, so I wasn't too worried about it.

When we got up there it was beautiful gardens, a real pretty area. We had a group photo taken. As we started to walk around and see the area our guide said, “Husbands and wives, do not show any public affection at all towards each other.” It's okay for men to hug in the Muslim culture but not for a man and a woman to hug or show any affection at all. He said, “They will stop you.” So we are walking around and one of the couples, you know, force of habit, they are walking along and their hands touch and before long they've clasped their hands and they are walking along that area. We realized how serious it was when two men showed up with rifles. As soon as they showed up the guide looked around quickly, and said, “Quick, quick let go, let go. They will shoot you.” We realized, “Whoa this is a different culture than what we're accustomed to, a different environment.”

Since 2001, that September, our country has thought a lot about Islam, about the Muslim faith. Our military is overseas in Iraq. It's also in Afghanistan and other countries, and we've learned a lot. We've seen video on television. We see that in those countries there are certain issues that are extremely important to those people, like who was allowed to lead? Only the men are allowed to lead in a Muslim country. It's a very male dominated society. In those countries, the Islamic leadership determines what music is allowed to be listened to and what type of entertainment people are allowed to partake in. The role of women is pretty well described and people have to participate in it. They are told how to dress and they are told what their role is. In many of those countries there is violence on people who do not conform to the rules that are expressed by the government. The worship practices, the styles, are to be uniform and universal. So whether you are a Muslim in Indonesia or a Muslim in the Middle East, that same style of worship, same music, same prescribed process. It has to be uniform and universal.

There is a distinct effort on the part of the Muslims to move the world back to the 8th century. Instead of them looking at life and trying to conform in some way to what is happening in the 21st century, their effort is to push the world back to the 8th century. The reason they do this is because they do not understand the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I'd like to study that with you today. Turn in your Bibles to Acts chapter 2. In Acts 2 we are continuing Peter's sermon. Last week we looked at his explanation of what was happening as the Holy Spirit was poured out and men began to speak in tongues. Peter quoted from Joel chapter 2 and described that it was a fulfillment of prophecy. In Acts 2:22-36 he continues his sermon. This sermon will be so effective that in verse 37 it says

“...they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’” The end result will be 3,000 will be added to the church after the end of this sermon. So let’s look at this sermon. I’m going to read it first. I’ll read it through with you and then we’ll look at some of the particulars.

Verse 22: “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered by the determined council and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. For David says concerning Him: ‘I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.’ Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne. He, foreseeing this spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.” Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

So Peter’s explanation of Pentecost continues. He’s talked about the prophecy that is fulfilled in Joel chapter 2. Now he talks about the resurrection of Jesus. He basically breaks the sermon down into three categories. The first category is about the life and ministry of Jesus. It’s found in verse 22. “Men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know.” Peter basically says that Jesus was a Man accredited, attested, approved, and commended by God and through Him supernatural activities took place. “You know it.” That’s what he’s saying. “You know it. You know all about that. That’s the Jesus that this whole thing is all about.”

The next thing Peter talks about is His death. Acts 2:23 “Him being delivered by the determined council and foreknowledge of God you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified and put to death.” Here Peter lays down the powerful foundation for the atonement where he says on one hand it was predetermined by God. God had planned it, that Jesus would come to earth, Jesus would die for humanity and be their Savior, but yet on the other hand humanity would take Him and crucify Him. And so the two were webbed together and what you have is the complete opposites on the spectrum of principle and love. On one hand you have God giving His Son in love that we might be

saved. You have an act of love, and that demonstrates the love of God toward man. On the other hand you have the depravity of man demonstrated in what they did with the gift of God in His son. They demonstrated man's natural hatred towards God and they crucified Jesus. So you see the two are webbed at this atonement theology that Peter is expressing.

We go on. Peter says in verse 24 "...whom God raised up having loosed the pains of death because it was not possible that He should be held by it." Now Peter begins to talk about the resurrection. This is a good weekend for us to talk about the resurrection. Peter quotes from to Psalm 16:8-11. Now I'd like you to turn to Psalm 16. It is actually a beautiful, beautiful Psalm. We're going to look at it for a few moments today. We are going to learn some principles of how to read and understand the Bible. Because Peter is initiating a whole new thing here and it's a little obscure and we might not catch it just immediately. But he is opening a whole new door for us. Here is Psalm 16 we being in verse 1.

David is the writer of this. He says, "Preserve me O God for in you I put my trust." This Psalm, by the way is a beautiful prayer, a beautiful prayer for you to pray. He says in verse 2: O my soul you have said to the Lord, You are my Lord, my goodness is nothing apart from You." That's pretty expressive of our condition isn't it? Our goodness is nothing apart from you. "As for the saints who are on the earth, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight. Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another god; their drink offerings of blood I will not offer, nor take up their names on my lips. You, O Lord, are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yes, I have a good inheritance. I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel; my heart also instructs me in the night seasons." Now in the next couple verses is what Peter is going to quote. David wrote this. "I have set the Lord always before; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved." If we were to put this in a little easier English we would say this. The Lord is leading me. He is always next to me. And because of that I know I'm not going to be rattled. He is right here. "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope." Because the Lord is near me I'm going to be glad. It just makes me filled with joy and I can rest in the hope of His presence. "For You will not leave my soul in the grave, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." This is the description of how God wants our experience with Him to be. What a beautiful description. In His presence are pleasures forevermore, fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore.

But Peter does something different. Peter takes this beautiful Psalm of David and through the experience of Jesus Christ reinterprets it rather than to apply to David, realizes that all scripture now since Jesus has come, must be understood through the experience of Jesus, through the witness of Jesus, and must be read through the life of Jesus. So when Peter looks at this he says that's not about David, that's about Jesus. And so we begin to learn the principle of how to read the Bible. One of the mistakes that people make as they read the Old Testament, it is beautiful and it's wonderful and we

should read it, but if they don't understand the Gospel, if they don't understand Jesus Christ and reinterpret the Old Testament through the experience of Jesus, they will have a distorted and an uncomfortable experience reading the word of God.

Let me share with you a couple of texts that help us to see this principle. Look at I Kings chapter 11. This is something that I learned from the young adults that come to study at our house every Thursday night. I Kings 11:6. It says "Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord and did not fully follow the Lord as did his father David." Now it's saying there quite clearly that David fully followed the Lord.

How many of you had heard about David or read about David? What is David famous for? The 11:30 crowd said Bathsheba. The 10:00 crowd said Goliath and you're back to Bathsheba. So I don't know about that 10:00 crowd. Really, it's too bad because David should be remembered for Goliath, shouldn't he? That was a tremendous victory.

But as his life went on David broke a number of God's commandments with adultery and murdering the woman's husband and then there's times he lies. Basically he's a pretty loose cannon. There's a lot in David's life that is displeasing to anybody who's sensitive about trying to serve God. But yet here in the Word of God it says he pleased the Lord. Now look at I Kings 14:8. It says, and we catch a sentence halfway, "...and tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you and yet, you have not been as My servant David who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart to do only what was right in My eyes.

Now here it is saying David kept the commandments, followed God with all his heart and only did what was right in the eyes of God. Now what is right? The stories of David or later years when people write about David, and could it not be said that, "Yes, the Bible is just myths and legends and they make these people to be bigger than life just like King Arthur in the court back in England?" So what is right? Remember the principle we are dealing with is, now because of Jesus all scripture bears witness of Christ and must be read through Christ.

So when we come to this passage we realize something absolutely amazing. In verse 8 "...and tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you, and yet you have not been as My servant David." Through Jesus Christ this is how David looks to God, "...who kept my commandments and who followed Me with all his heart to do only what was right in My eyes."

You see, when Jesus is our Savior, God does not see in us the vileness of the sinner but the likeness of His Son in whom we believe. Brothers and Sisters, you can take that verse and you can write My servant Jerry, My servant Susan, My servant Linda, whatever your name is and you insert it there and this is what God is saying if you are in Christ today. You have kept His commandments. You follow Him with all your heart and you only do what is right in His eyes. Is that good news? So reading through Christ helps us to understand the scriptures. Peter saw that the Old Testament references to David and to David's seed would actually find their fulfillment in Christ.

Now let me read two passages with you that are just a little confusing. But, if we understand this to be true that you read it through Christ and that the fulfillment was not in David's seed literally but through Christ, then it begins to make sense. Please turn to Isaiah 11. There is a great deal of confusion in the Christian world. Here is where the confusion is. Regarding the nation of Israel, the belief is that the prophecies regarding Israel are for an ethnic group of people in a geographical location. So in 1948, when Israel becomes a nation again, that that is somehow a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. It is not. It has nothing to do with Bible prophecy. Because when you read the scriptures through Christ, Jesus said that He was taking the kingdom from Israel and giving it to another who would bear fruit to Him, His followers, His believers. So when we read these passages we realize this is what should have happened when the Messiah came. Had they accepted Jesus this would have taken place. They didn't accept Jesus.

Now verses 1-5 of chapter 11 are describing Jesus. He would be the rod of the stem of Jesse. The spirit of the Lord would rest upon Him. His delight would be in the Lord. He would judge with righteousness. He would have faithfulness in His belt. Now we come to verse 6. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb. The leopard shall lay down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." What is that describing? We say heaven. What was it describing for Isaiah? It was describing Israel, had they accepted the Messiah. And notice this. Not everything in here will apply properly to heaven.

And so what we see is that the prophecies that were meant for Israel, had they accepted the Savior, turn now for God's followers in Christ, but not in every particular. Let's continue reading, verse 7: "The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den."

Are there going to be dangerous snakes in heaven? Nothing that will hurt, nothing that will harm. It goes on, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious. It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left," verse 12 says, "He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and shall gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. Also the envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim. But they shall fly down upon the shoulder of the Philistines toward the west; together they shall plunder the people of the East..." Does that sound like heaven to you? It's not. It's applying to those people had they accepted Jesus. But now that we read it through Christ, we realize this in part applies to heaven.

The same is true of Isaiah 65. If you would like to read that this afternoon I refer you to it. In Isaiah 65 it talks about your children living to be 100 years old and yet is the same

passages that we apply towards heaven. I am hoping that this will help you to understand your Bibles better so that you go through Christ to understand what is going on.

Now let's go back to Acts chapter 2. Peter in his sermon will identify that Jesus would rise from the dead. They are all witnesses to that. He says that in verse 32. "This Jesus God has raised up of which we are all witnesses." Then he talks about the exaltation of Christ. Verses 33-36: "Therefore, being exalted to the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand till I make your enemies your footstool.'" Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." There, that's his sermon.

Really, what does it mean for us? In fact, what does the resurrection mean to us? How many of you have ever heard that this is a good life we live as Christians and even if it weren't true I'd still want to live it? How many of you have ever heard somebody say that? I think that's a joke. I wouldn't want to do that. Trying to love people that are hard to love, why bother? Unless there's a motivation and it's to serve God and to please Him. Why bother? Some say, "Oh well it's a good life and I'd live it anyway." Well, in essence they aren't grasping the power of the resurrection. What does the resurrection mean to us?

Let's look at Matthew 16:21. Jesus is identified as speaking about the future here. It says, "From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, and chief priests, and scribes and be killed and be raised again the third day." So what does the resurrection mean? What if Jesus hadn't risen from the dead? What then? What would it prove? Would it prove anything? In fact, can any of you prove that Jesus rose from the dead?

I'll tell you what it would prove. If Jesus did not rise from the dead it would prove Him to be a liar or a lunatic. He said, I'm going to Jerusalem, I'm going to suffer much at the hands of the elders, the scribes and the chief priest, they're going to kill me, but on the third day I'm going to rise from the dead. The fact that Jesus rose from the dead demonstrates He speaks truth. Consequently we can trust Him. What He said was true. He also said He's coming back again. So the resurrection confirms that what Jesus taught is true. It validates Him. But what if it's not true?

Look what Paul says in I Corinthians 15:17. Paul says this, "And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile. You are still in your sins." Now let's think about this. If Christ is not risen your faith is futile. Now imagine this group of followers of Jesus: So Jesus dies. He's buried. But he doesn't really rise from the dead. But they make that story up because they're going to start a brand new church. They are going to start a brand new movement. Won't that be wonderful? Won't that be glorious? Every single one of them is going to die as a result of that, except for John. He will die of old age. The others will be martyred. None of them received any special anything from it. No monetary gain. They lose everything. They are against culture. They are against society. Everyone's

against them. Why would you stand in an arena with a wild animal chasing you and say “I’m willing to die for a lie, how about you?”

It’s not a lie. It’s true. Paul says look, if Jesus didn’t rise from the dead, your faith is futile. Forget it. There’s nothing to it. So the resurrection gives us confidence that Jesus was who he said he was and His teachings are true. But even more, Paul says if it didn’t happen you are still in your sins. What does he mean by that?

Look at Romans chapter 4. If the resurrection didn’t take place, I don’t care how many prayers you’ve offered Mary, you are still in your sins. Here it is, Romans 4:23. It says, “Now it was not written for his sake alone (speaking of Abraham) that it was imputed to him but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him, who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead who was delivered up (that means delivered up to the cross) because of our offenses and was raised because of our justification.” In other words, God is telling us in His word, the reason Jesus rose from the dead is because God accepted the sacrifice of Jesus in our behalf. And we are justified and the evidence we are justified is the resurrection. Without the resurrection, we are still in our sins. We have no hope at all. But because of the resurrection, God can look at us and say, anyone of us that are in Christ, “There’s my servant, they keep all my commandments, they always walk before Me in a way that is pleasing to Me, and they always do what is right in My eyes.” We have been justified in Christ. The resurrection proves it. Is that good news to you?

Now, there’s another important reason for the resurrection. Let’s say Abraham remains in the grave. You will still have the Jewish faith. Let’s say that Buddha remains in the grave. You will still have Buddhists. Let say Confucius stays in the grave. You will still have Confucianism. Let’s say that Mohammed stays in the grave. You’ll still have Muslim and the Islamic faith. Let’s say that Jesus lays in the grave. What do you have? You don’t have anything.

Now let me shock you. Pay close attention. There is no salvation without Jesus being alive, because our salvation is not based upon teachings or philosophies or lifestyles. In fact, let me shock you. There is no truth that Jesus taught that can save you. It is Himself that saves you. Now we started out talking about Muslims and Islamic faith. You may be wondering what that’s got to do with this and the resurrection.

I received a magazine this week published by people who are members of our church, not our local congregation, but the general church. This magazine is not an official publication of the denomination but some would think it was and some would ascribe to its teaching as being the official teachings.

Here is what the issues in that magazine were: Who is allowed to lead in the church? What music and entertainment should be allowed by the adherence of the church? What is the role of women and how should they dress? And though they don’t prescribe it, I know there is a violent attitude that those people have towards folks who do not conform to their concepts of Christianity. And in that magazine they talked about worship practice styles being uniform and universal regardless of culture, time or place. And

though it's not an effort to push us back to the 8th century, it is a distinct effort to push us back to the 19th century where you have a purity of whatever was so wonderful back then.

Many of you probably got that magazine. And I'm telling you Brothers and Sisters, if you want your faith built on teachings and lifestyle and rights and wrongs, you might as well become a Muslim, because you're no closer to the kingdom than they are, because it is a man that saves us. His name is Jesus Christ. There is no teaching, no practice, no policies, nothing that saves us. It is a person. His name is Jesus.

And it is amazing to me how unfortunate it is that legalism, the subtleties and its tentacles, just creeps in at every hand choking the life out of people. Because the principle that we are taught through the word of God, a powerful principle in God's word is that by beholding we are changed. There's a tremendous effort to get you to be concerned about what to wear, what to eat, and to have yourself consumed with these issues and the reality is it takes your eyes off of your Savior. When you get your eyes off Jesus you become what you behold. You will not become like Christ.

We might as well establish an Islamic state and call it Adventism and say the women are going to dress this way, the men are going to be in charge, we're only going to eat this, and every worship service we'll do this and we'll have these songs and we'll meet at these times, and this is the order of service, and that's the way it's going to be. And if you don't like it you're wrong and you're going to hell. The truth is, Brothers and Sisters, what we need is Jesus Christ. The only hope we have is a person, and that's what the resurrection teaches us.

Now today, I don't know where you're at. Somebody told me earlier, "Boy, Pastor, that sermon offends everybody. You got the dispensationalist upset because of Israel and now you've got many Adventists upset because of their religion. All I know is, Jesus says, He is the way. He is the truth. He is the life. That's it. We need a Savior, and if you would like to tell Him you want Him to be your Savior, I'm going to ask you to stand right where you're at.