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## RESURRECTION: GOD SAVES

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### Part 9 of Doctrine

Pastor Mark Driscoll | June 01, 2008

You are listening to Doctrine, a sermon series where Pastor Mark Driscoll covers the basic beliefs of Christianity. This series also serves as a prerequisite for membership at Mars Hill Church. For more audio and video content, visit [MarsHillChurch.org](http://MarsHillChurch.org).

Well, howdy, Mars Hill. Good to see you. Good to have you with us. If you're new, my name is Mark, one of the pastors at the church. We're in the middle of a series called doctrine. It's a mega-church suicide series where we're going through the entire storyline of the Bible, from creation to new creation, 13 weeks of theology – not a lot of redneck jokes, no sex. You can leave now. (Laughter) And the reason is we want you to know the basic truths, the essential truth of the Christian faith. We're also using this series as an opportunity for people to become or renew their membership at Mars Hill Church, to get connected and plugged in and be on mission with us and with the God of the Bible.

And so today we're dealing with the issue of the resurrection, that Jesus is alive. Just so you know, this is a big deal for Christianity. In fact, without this there is no Christianity. So in many ways today we hit the issue: is Jesus dead or alive? Some say, "Oh, what does it matter?" Well – everything is details, this is really the heart of what it means to be a Christian. For those of you that have hung in for this sermon series, both of you, I'm deeply grateful for that. And for those of you who have missed a few weeks, as always everything is online. I'll go ahead and pray and we will get right to work. Much of the content for this is in chapter 7 of Vintage Jesus, and I'll do a summary of some of the highlights of the resurrection for you today.

Father God, we begin by thanking you for being a great God, a loving God. God, we acknowledge that through sin we have brought death into human history, and subsequently there is no hope apart from the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus, we thank you so much that you lived the life we have not lived, you died the death we should've died, and that you rose to give us new life, forgiveness of sins. And so, God, as we study today it is my prayer that the person and the work and the ongoing life and ministry of Jesus would be actually believed by us, and that we would live in light of that. We ask this in Jesus' good name. Amen.

Well, I'll start on the issue of the resurrection of Jesus by telling you that apart from the resurrection of Jesus there is no Christianity, that the big sequence of events that hold together Christianity is the life, death, burial, resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus was a great teacher, but Christianity is not based on his teachings. Jesus was a great miracle worker, and Christianity is not based upon his miracles, save perhaps this one. Jesus was a great servant: he fed the poor and cared for the marginalized and the weak, but Christianity is not focused or founded on those kinds of acts. All of those are incredibly important and teach us a great deal about Jesus, and I don't mean to minimize or trivialize any of those. But you can be a non-Christian and believe that Jesus was a great teacher, that he performed miracles, and that he helped people.

The distinguishing feature of what it means to be Christian is you believe he rose from death, the doctrine of the resurrection. Paul says it this way in 1 Corinthians 15, which if you were gonna look at one chapter of the Bible to look at the issue of resurrection, that would be the best one to have a theological understanding of the resurrection of Jesus. He says this in 1 Corinthians 15:17: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins." Paul says elsewhere in that chapter that if Jesus is still dead, we're just pitiful. I mean, it's just foolish to believe in Jesus, to be a Christian, to confess your sins to Jesus, to believe that there is hope for life after this life.

And so my hope today is to show you that the Christian belief in the resurrection of Jesus is absolutely meritorious, that it is worthy of you trusting in. And you should have the confidence to share this truth with others, knowing that there are good historical reasons why we believe in the resurrection of Jesus. We'll walk through a series of questions.

The first is, what is the resurrection? Let me define this. It's not life after death. It's not somebody died and, oh, they went to be in a better place with God. It is three things. One, you're alive. This would be an illustration. You're alive, okay? And then you die – I won't illustrate that, but you die, okay? You cease living. You're metaphysically challenged philosophically, we call it. You're dead, okay – for a while, for a period of time not, like, 30 seconds and come back. That's resuscitation. You're dead for a while. And then third, you come back. You're back to physical life – walking, eating, talking, fully restored to physical life. Not just the same condition of physical life, but a perfected physical life. Jesus was able to walk into rooms where the doors were locked. He had a glorified resurrected body that shows his crucifixion scars, and so there was consistency in his physically resurrected body. But it also was in a state of perfection that was apart from the kind of suffering and limitations that the normal human body seems to endure. So it's you're dead, and then you're alive again physically. That's what resurrection means.

Next question is, what is the biblical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus? I'll give you nine points. The first is this: it was prophesied in advance. I'll read this to you from Isaiah 53. Now Isaiah by many is called the fifth gospel because he talks so much about Jesus, though it is 700 years in advance,

that you can put together virtually the entire life of Jesus: his virgin birth, his sinless life, his betrayal, his death, his crucifixion between two thieves, his burial in a rich man's tomb, and his resurrection from Isaiah, prophesied 700 years in advance.

I'll give you one section in Isaiah 53, beginning in verse 6. "All we like sheep" – that's you and I – "have gone astray." We've all wandered from God. "We have turned – every one – to his own way" – that is sin – "and the Lord has laid on him" – that is Jesus – "the iniquity" – or the sin – "of us all." So Jesus went to the cross and died in our place for our sins. That's what we looked at last week. "He was oppressed" – and he was. He was beaten and falsely accused and flogged and harmed. "He was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth." He didn't defend himself. "Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers are silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away" – seven false trials Jesus endured. "As for his generation, who considered that he was cut off from the land of the living" – that's dead, he's cut off from the land of the living – "stricken for the transgression of my people." He died in our place for our sins. "And they made his grave with the wicked" – Jesus was crucified between two thieves – "and with the rich in his death" – it was prophesied that Jesus would be buried in a rich man's tomb, though he himself was poor – "and there was no deceit in his mouth." He was sinless and perfect.

"Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for sin" – after Jesus died on the cross for our sins – "he shall see his offspring" – resurrection, he'll come back. "He shall prolong his days" – he'll still live again after he dies – "and the will of the Lord" – that is salvation – "shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied" – after he dies he'll come back. He'll see the effects of his work and he'll be satisfied – resurrection. "And by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, for he shall bear their iniquities" – pay the penalty for their sin.

Isaiah says 700 years in advance, "Jesus is coming. He won't sin. You will kill him. He'll be crucified between two thieves. You will bury him in a rich man's tomb. And then he will return to life and be satisfied with the salvation that he provides" – 700 years in advance. So there was an anticipation by those who believed the Old Testament Scriptures that this was going to happen in history, this death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Secondly, Jesus himself predicts repeatedly his own death, burial, and resurrection. I'll give you one series of examples in Mark's gospel beginning in chapter 8. There are many; I'll give you three just from this gospel and I'll read them quickly. Matthew 8:31, it says, "And Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man" – that's a title that he adopted for himself from the Old Testament – "must suffer many things, be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." Mark 9:30-31, Jesus says again, teaching – and again, this is a common theme in his instruction, "They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. But when he is killed, after three days he will rise again.'" Mark 10 – 8, 9, 10, Jesus keeps talking about this. I'll give you the final example. Mark 10:33-34: Jesus said, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise."

So firstly, the biblical evidence is that Isaiah prophesied there would be the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus. Jesus prophesied, "You will kill me. Three days later I'll see you again. I'll be back." He was absolutely clear that not only would he die, but that three days he would be in the grave before returning.

Number three, Jesus died on the cross. That's the third line of biblical evidence. Jesus died on the cross. He was flogged – many men died from the flogging, we discussed it last week. He was then crucified by a professional executioner. That means this guy's job is to kill people. That's all he does. This is his specialty. He declares Jesus to be dead. To ensure that Jesus is dead, he takes a spear, runs it – the Bible records – through his side under his ribcage into his heart sac so that his heart explodes, and water and blood flows from Jesus' side. The point is he's most assuredly dead. Jesus is then wrapped in burial preparation that is upwards of 100 pounds of linens and spices; think a nearly mummified state. No breathing, no air. He's then laid without any medical attention in a cold tomb hewn out of rock. The point is that Jesus is dead. He has no medical care, no food, no water, no air for three days. He's dead. He's dead.

Number four, Jesus was buried in a well-known tomb. When Jesus died he was a poor man – homeless, in fact. He couldn't afford a nice burial location, so there was a quiet disciple of his, the Bible records, a man named Joseph of Arimathea. And he came along in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah that Jesus would be buried in a rich man's tomb. And he gifted post-mortem to Jesus his tomb, his own private burial chamber. Joseph of Arimathea was a very well-known political and religious leader. He knew exactly where his tomb was and he gifted it to Jesus. Jesus' body was laid there. A large stone guarding the entrance was rolled in front. Guards were posted from the government to protect that burial site of Jesus from tampering. And the governmental seal was placed upon the tomb, essentially declaring that if anyone were to tamper with it they would be put to death.

Next, three days later, Jesus returned triumphant, victorious over death. Again, the gospels record this. I'll give you the account from Luke 24. And what was Luke's vocation? He was a doctor, so he understands what dead people are like and what living people are like. He can distinguish the two. In fact, that's his job. Now, Luke is a physician. He's a doctor. I mean, he's giving the report of the resurrection of Jesus. This is a medical report of the resurrection of Jesus in Luke 24. We'll begin in verse 1.

"On the first day of the week" – with Jesus it's a whole new world. His resurrection begins a whole new reality – "at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared." These are the women; they're mentioned at the end of chapter 23. "And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb" – so the stone is gone – "but they went in and they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus." So the stone's away, the women walk in, and there's no Jesus. Verse 4: "While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel" – lot of bling. Some think perhaps angels. "And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but he is risen. Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee'" – weren't you guys paying attention? He said three days later he would

be back. What are you doing here? It's three days. He's gone. "That the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and on the third day rise.' And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed them an idle tale, and they did not believe them."

So the women come and they say, "Gentlemen, Jesus is alive." And the guys think they're being emotional. (Laughter) "They're being emotional. We need to go check this for ourselves." So the guys go to the tomb to investigate. "Peter rose and ran to the tomb" – verse 12 – "stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what happened." The tomb is empty. Jesus is not there.

But Jesus starts appearing to people, very much alive. Not a few months in, you know, ICU recovering – he's alive, walking around, eating, visiting with people, praying for people, doing life as he had previously. And Jesus' occurrences are faithfully recorded shortly after his resurrection. We read of this, for example, in 1 Corinthians 15, and I'll read this account to you. Over the course of 40 days, before ascending back to heaven, Jesus appeared to small groups, large groups, individuals, family, friends, foes, strangers. He ate. He had dialogue. People embraced him. He was very much physically alive.

Paul says it this way in 1 Corinthians 15, beginning in verse 3. "For I delivered to you as of first importance" – most important fact in all of human history – "that Christ died" – first thing – "for our sins" – we looked at that last week, the importance of for our sins – "in accordance with the Scriptures" – it was predicted in the Old Testament, the Bible is trustworthy and true – "that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, then he appeared to Cephas" – after he rose he appeared to Peter, that is Peter – "then to the twelve" – the rest of the disciples. "Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time" – so large crowds see Jesus alive – "most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep" – we'll come back to that. "Then he appeared to James" – that's his brother – "then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he also appeared to me."

What he's saying here is this: "Lots of people saw Jesus alive, walking around, fully resurrected, physically resurrected." Now, Paul says, "If you don't believe me, go ask them. They're still alive." 1 Corinthians is considered by nearly all scholars to be one of the first New Testament books written. Some would say that the resurrection of Jesus was myth, legend, fable and folklore that came into existence dozens or hundreds of years after the resurrection. Here we see written within a few short years of the resurrection of Jesus Paul's letter to the Corinthians saying, "Jesus rose. Peter saw him. His brother James saw him. The disciples saw him. I saw him. And upwards of 500 people at a time saw him. There are innumerable eyewitnesses. If you don't believe me, a few of them have passed away, but most of them are still alive. Go check it out for yourself."

Additionally, additionally there are a few people that begin testifying to the resurrection of Jesus, that had Jesus not risen, they would not testify. First is Thomas. You remember what Thomas was? The doubter – the doubting Thomas, right? You've heard that expression? "Oh, you're a doubting Thomas." Well, Thomas was a guy who was told Jesus – he was one of Jesus' disciples – "Jesus is resurrected." He said, "I don't believe it. People don't resurrect." You know, and Thomas is right. They don't. It's unusual. (Laughter) That's the point. And so Thomas said, "I want to see for myself," so he got to see Jesus. Jesus said, "Look, here's my scars in my hands and side. It's me, Thomas." And Thomas fell down and worshiped, saying, "My Lord, my God." He worshiped Jesus. Now, he didn't initially believe it. He needed to be convinced. But he was. Some of you are doubters like Thomas. You need to trust his testimony.

How about this? Who else worshiped him that would've been unlikely to do so? How about his mother and his two brothers? Jesus' brothers, James and Jude – one of them, James, is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15, that I just read. Now, I've said it before, I'll say it again. I have two brothers, as Jesus did, James and Jude, and neither of them have ever worshiped me as God and I don't think they will. (Laughter) I don't think my two brothers would ever say, "We lived with him. We grew up with him. He's our big brother. He never sinned – ever. And he died and he rose and we worship him as Yahweh." They would not say that ever, right? I mean, 'cause their underwear was over their head at various points of their childhood. (Laughter) They know – it's a wedge – they know – they know I'm sinless, Lord, God, Savior, and Christ. In fact, not even close.

Now, what would it take for your brothers, if you have them – if they're still alive and you didn't kill them – if your brothers are still alive, what would it take for them to worship you as God, particularly if they're devout Jews? Some of you may not know a devout Jew. Let's say they were a devout Muslim, somebody who's very religiously devoted. What would it take for them to worship you as God, knowing that if they were wrong they would spend forever in hell? It would take something as amazing as the resurrection. During his life Jesus' own mother and brothers came to see him. They didn't worship him as God, they thought they had lost his mind and they were gonna bring him home. "Come on home. Have some pudding. Sit down. You know, you think you're Messiah – he's lost it."

Jesus' own mother Mary worships him as God. We see this early on in the book of Acts where she's numbered with the early church. How many of you would never be able to get your mother to worship you as divine God and Savior? I mean, she spanked you – she may still. (Laughter) You know, your mother – if anyone knows that you're a sinner your mother knows, right? She knows. Jesus' mother, in worshiping him as God, knew that she would be breaking one of the Ten Commandment, damning her soul to eternity if she were a liar. And she worshiped her own son as God because of the resurrection.

That's the biblical case. This is a very strong case, very unlikely people, including lastly – I just read to you from 1 Corinthians 15. Who wrote that? Paul. Was Paul inclined to worship as God? He's the least likely man to worship Jesus. He's the Osama bin Laden of his day, right? He's totally opposed to Christianity. He's totally opposed to Jesus. He is out wreaking havoc in the lives of God's people. He is murdering early church leaders like Stephen. He is absolutely not predisposed in any way to believe Jesus is God. And then he sees Jesus resurrected, alive. And he becomes a Christian and a pastor and writes many of the books of the New Testament. He himself dies and repeatedly suffers for the cause of the resurrection of Jesus.

This is the collective, very compelling biblical evidence. Leads us to the next question, what is the circumstantial evidence for Jesus' resurrection? I'll give you nine additional points on this as well. The first is the disciples were transformed. These guys were ultimate cowards, not ultimate fighters. These guys, after Jesus died, they went into a room, they locked the door, and they hid. They were very cowardly. Even disciples like Peter, when Jesus was going to be crucified, a young gal came up to him and said, "Aren't you with Jesus?" "Oh, I don't know that guy. I never met him." He's scared of a junior high girl, right? (Laughter) These are not bold men.

After they see Jesus resurrected from death they become very bold. Eleven of the twelve die martyrs' deaths. Peter is hung upside-down. John is boiled alive and doesn't die – he's the only one who isn't put to death by murder – they try. How do you explain guys who are absolutely cowards becoming martyrs, apart from the resurrection of Jesus? See, they no longer feared death as they once had.

Number two, they remained loyal to Jesus as their Messiah. Now, every so often there are a number of people who get really excited about someone. This might be a religious leader. This might be a political leader. But once that leader dies or fails or loses the election, no one continues to back them. Like today, there's not a huge Dukakis movement, for example, right? (Laughter) There's not a bunch of people that are like, "Michael Dukakis!" Some of you are like, "Who is that?" That's my point. He was at one time a presidential candidate, a little guy who jumped out of a huge tank and it ruined everything. It was very goofy looking. Nonetheless – some of you go, "Who cares?" That's my point. That's my whole point! Nobody cares! And had Jesus simply died, no one would've cared. No one would've cared! You get really excited. "Maybe he's the guy who will make a difference!" "Well, he didn't make a difference." Move on.

Why would people stay devoted to Jesus and why would their number grow so quickly if he were just another dead potential leader? There is no reason to explain the loyalty and devotion to Jesus, apart from the resurrection.

Number three, the character of the disciples mitigates against considering them to be liars. Are these the kind of men who lie, feeding the hungry, caring for those in need, defending widows and orphans, living in simplicity and poverty? Furthermore, I don't know about you, when I lie I tend to lie in ways that benefit me, right? Like, let's say some horrible act of terrorism is conducted. If I didn't do it, I don't just call the police and be like, "Eh, I did it." I don't own things that are to my detriment, and when I lie, I lie in beneficial ways. Why would you lie knowing that that lie would cause you to be arrested, beaten, harmed, and then crucified? I don't know about you. When I lie, it's to get stuff, but not stuff like crucifixion, right? It doesn't make any sense? And their character is not that they are liars, and they have nothing to gain – no financial, political, or spiritual gain at all.

Additionally, number four, the Sabbath changed from Saturday to Sunday. The Jews, according to one of the Ten Commandments, had celebrated their Sabbath on Saturday for more than 1,000 years, and then it shifts to Sunday. Why? That's the day of the resurrection of Jesus. There's no way to account for devout, orthodox, Bible-believing Jews to walk away from and abandon one of the Ten Commandments apart from the resurrection of Jesus, that he had brought a whole new world.

Number five, people began worshiping Jesus as God. And again, the first of the Ten Commandments are these: there is one God, you worship him alone. People start saying, "Yeah, Jesus is that God and we worship him alone." Well, if that's not true, you're gonna go to hell forever. "I know, but it's true. He rose from death. He is Lord, God, Savior, and Christ." There's no way to account for that.

Additionally, the early church had sacraments like communion and baptism. Communion, remembering the death of Jesus, baptism, remembering the resurrection of Jesus. Communion, showing the death of Jesus through bread, which is symbolic of his body, and wine, which is symbolic of his blood. And then the resurrection being shown in baptism, that the Christian is placed under the water as Jesus was placed under the ground, and as Jesus rose, the Christian is brought up out of the water. And as Jesus cleanses them from the filth of sin, it is symbolized in the water cleansing them from filth. Why would communion and baptism become so absolutely essential to the life of the church apart from the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus? There's no other answer.

Number seven, some say, "Well, the stories are fabricated and they're not true. They're lies." And the point there is, "Well, then they're not told in a very good way," because who were – we just read it in Luke 24 – who were the first witnesses to the empty tomb of Jesus, men or women? Women. Now, in that culture women were not legally allowed to testify as witnesses. You need to know this. So were this a lie – we're gonna lie about the resurrection of Jesus, we're gonna put together a very complicated hoax – the only way to make that legally tenable would be to have men as the purported eyewitnesses so they could testify legally in court. The reason that women are told to be the initial eyewitnesses is because that's exactly how it happened. It's not a lie. It's a historical reality. Women were at the empty tomb of Jesus first, therefore that's what the story says. And were that story made up, it wouldn't be made up in that way.

Number eight, the tomb was not enshrined. In that day there were over 100 tombs of holy men that were enshrined, one archaeologist reports. Likewise, in our day if someone we know dies, if you go to their place of burial, what do you see? Flowers, cards, gifts. If they're really famous you'll see the gravesite memorialized. After a few days no one visited Jesus' tomb. There were no flowers. There were no cards. There were no memorials. There were no candles. Nothing was happening at Jesus' burial place. Why? You could go have lunch with him, right? (Laughter) There's no need to show up there with your, you know, guitar and do emo. There's no need. He's gone. Go have lunch with him. So the tomb was not enshrined because the body was not there.

And number nine, this is perhaps the most compelling, Christianity comes into existence. Today a few billion people on earth call themselves Christians. Every effect has a great cause, and the question is how could you have the effect of the Christian faith without something as magnificent and monumental as the resurrection of Jesus? There is no explanation how 120 scared people in an upper room end up becoming a few billion people around the globe that all worship Jesus is God. And he is, above and beyond everyone who has ever lived, the most influential man in history. And he

is worshiped as God by more people than any other god in the history of the world, any other purported god in the history of the world. And again, this raises the issue of burden of proof, right? If Jesus didn't rise from death, then how do you explain all of this? What other possible answer could there be?

That leads to the next question. What is the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus? I'll give you one brief fact, prefaced by a quote. Thomas Arnold – he was a professor of modern history at Oxford – said this, “No one fact in the history of mankind is proven by better and fuller evidence of every sort than this one: Christ died and rose from the dead.”

One of the great non-Christian historical evidences for the resurrection of Jesus comes from an ancient historian name Josephus. He lived about 37 AD to about 100 AD, so he was born right after Jesus' death, burial, resurrection. And he was a well-noted historian in his day, working for the government. He himself was not a Christian, he just was a historian. So here's what he says. “Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works” – miracles – “a teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ, the anointed one of God. And when Pilate” – the political leader – “at the suggestion of the principal men among us had condemned him to the cross” – there's the cross” – those that loved him at first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again on the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold” – the Old Testament. “These and 10,000 other wonderful things concerning him, and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct to this day.”

Josephus says, “Jesus died on a cross, and the reason people stayed loyal to him is because on the third day he resurrected back to life.” That's why Christianity exists. Non-Christian, employed by the state as a historian. Some say, “Well, that's just what the Bible says.” That's also what history said. Jesus was alive, he died, he was buried, and he rose from death. That's what he said.

Additionally, next question is, what are the primary objections to Jesus' resurrection? I'm sure some of you have these objections. I had them before I became a Christian at age 19. As well, those of you who believe in the resurrection of Jesus, your family, friends, coworkers, neighbors will ask you, “What about this? What about this? What about this?” So I want you to know this so that you can lovingly answer their questions.

The first is, “Didn't Jesus just swoon on the cross?” This is what Islam and Christian Science teaches. “Jesus didn't die on the cross; he passed out.” Just look at the evidence. He was flogged – many men died from that. He was crucified – you die. Whole point of – just so you know, what's the whole point of crucifixion? Death? It's like, “Well, he went to the electric chair and he didn't die.” They made it for one reason. It has one function – not to watch television, to die. That's its only function. The whole point of the cross, you die. That's it. Who oversaw the crucifixion? A guy who's a professional at killing people. Jesus dies. Again, what do they run under his ribs? A spear. What does it go through? His heart. Just so you know, if you don't have a heart, you're done, all right? I mean, some of you go, “But I'm not a doctor.” I know, but we all agree on this point. If a sword goes through your heart and the water and blood flow out of the side, game over. You're done, right?

Then they wrap him in 100 pounds of linen and spices, mummified state, can't breathe, no food, water, or medical attention, put into a cold rock-hewn tomb for three days. If Jesus didn't die, that's a miracle. And if he did die, how does he get all the burial wrappings off? As a dying, sick man, how does he roll the stone away and walk into town and convince everyone, “I have defeated death! Look at me!” That's guy's in the hospital for months without a heart. (Laughter) Okay, you got the point. All right.

Number two, some say Jesus didn't rise physically, he rose spiritually. He didn't rise in history, he rises in our hearts. This is what Jehovah's Witnesses teach, and this is absolutely contradictory to the evidence. We read it in Luke 24 where Jesus says, “A spirit” – after his resurrection – “A spirit does not have flesh and blood as I do.” “I've got a body. I'm here physically.” Thomas came up to him and saw the scars – saw his physical body. People came up and embraced him, the Bible says. They came up and gave him a hug. Furthermore, Jesus eats meals with people after his resurrection. He's physically alive, very much physically alive.

Number three, some say, “Well, they went to the wrong tomb.” Went to the wrong tomb? Well, again, the problem is the tomb was gifted to Jesus post-mortem by Joseph of Arimathea. He was a very well-known man. If they wanted to confirm the location of the tomb, all they would have had to do is go to Joseph of Arimathea and say, “Where's your tomb?” And he would show them, “That's my tomb.” And this is all historically recorded. Like today, if you buy a home or a piece of land, it's recorded. It's yours. There's legal documentation. It's easy to verify.

Additionally, the women who wanted to visit Jesus' tomb, they knew exactly where it was. They went there. The disciples, when they heard about it with Peter, they ran there. They knew exactly where it was. And furthermore, even if they put Jesus in the wrong tomb, how do you explain him being alive, right? “Well, they put him in the wrong tomb.” Well, then, he resurrected in another tomb. It still doesn't get around the big issue. (Laughter) Right? Okay. Both of you got that. Wonderful.

Number four. Some people say, “He had a twin brother that looked like him and he did a little stunt double.” First of all, there's no evidence that he had a twin brother, and Mary would know. (Laughter) And second of all, Jesus, the one who was murdered, was the one who was resurrected because on his body were the crucifixion scars confirmed for Thomas. This is just grasping for straws. This is trying to deny the inevitable. “Well, maybe he had a brother, and maybe he brother died for him, and maybe they faked it, and maybe his brother's still dead but then Jesus is alive, and” – is there any evidence historically? No. Secondly, how do you account for the scars on Jesus' body if someone else was crucified? It's illogical, doesn't make any sense at all.

Others say, “Oh, it was a hallucination.” Right? This has been popular by some at various points in the church. “They all hallucinated.” Really? His mother hallucinated? His brothers hallucinated? His enemies hallucinated? His friends hallucinated? Crowds of strangers hallucinated? Upwards of 500

people at a time hallucinated? Now, I know some of you have had very bad history with drugs, and you've had interesting hallucinations. But they tend to be private, right? Like, you tend not to smoke weed, go to college, and everyone goes on that trip with you, right? Because they don't share in your private hallucination, right? Hallucination is, by definition, a private thing. Something that's public, well, that's an event. That's, like, 500 of us, we just had this hallucination that we went to the concert. No. If you all had a hallucination of the concert, and the set list, and the band, you were at a concert (Laughter) because you don't have 500 people sharing a hallucination.

Furthermore, the hallucination has to be based on some prior concept. There was no concept – we'll get to this in a moment – in Judaism or in paganism of an individual person rising from death, and so you can't hallucinate for something you don't have any concept of.

Additionally, hallucination doesn't just end at 40 days. It's not like hundreds of people have a hallucination, then on Tuesday it's over. "Oh, Tuesday! We're done." The appearances of Jesus ceased at 40 days because he then ascended back into heaven. It wasn't a hallucination. It was an event of the resurrection.

And then number six, there is this common ideology that says, "The resurrection of Jesus was an idea that was borrowed. It was taken." First of all, the Jewish people had a strong concept of the resurrection of the dead, but it wasn't an individual resurrection, it was a corporate resurrection of God's people. They took it from Daniel 12:3, where it says that there is coming a day that the multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will resurrect, will arise, some to everlasting death, some to everlasting life. So their concept of resurrection, God's people in the Old Testament, was that one day we'll all resurrect, and some people are going to hell, and some people are going to heaven forever in their physically resurrected, glorified bodies.

Secondly, paganism did not have any concept of a resurrection of one person in a physical body. NT Wright – he's a New Testament scholar. I don't like his work on something called justification, but his work on the resurrection is brilliant. He wrote a 700-page tome called *The Resurrection of the Son of God* – hugely important work. I'll read at length, because I think as a very well-noted theologian and scholar he says it well. These are a collection of statements from his tome on the resurrection. NT Wright says, "Insofar as the ancient, non-Jewish world has a Bible, its Old Testament was Homer. And insofar as Homer had anything to say about resurrection, he is quite blunt: it doesn't happen. The idea of resurrection is denied in ancient paganism from Homer all the way to the Athenian dramatist Aeschylus" – I probably said it wrong – "who wrote, 'Once a man has died and the dust has soaked up his blood, there is no resurrection.'"

Those who say, "Oh, they stole the idea!" Not from that guy, I'll tell you that right now. According to Wright, neither in Plato nor Aristotle do we find any suggestion that resurrection, the return to bodily life of the dead person, was either desirable or possible. In Greek thinking you're physical and spiritual. The spiritual is good, the physical is bad. The whole goal is to leave the physical and to go into the spiritual. The worst thing, in Greek thinking, was to have a physical body. The whole point of spirituality was to get rid of the physical body. The last thing they longed for or believed in was a resurrected physical body. They considered that the problem – wrongly – not the solution.

Wright goes on to say, "Christianity was born into a world where its central claim was known to be false. Many believed that the dead were nonexistent. Outside of Judaism nobody believed resurrection." Wright concludes, "Nobody in the pagan world of Jesus' world and thereafter actually claimed that somebody had been truly dead, and then come to be truly and bodily alive once more."

In summary, death in ancient paganism is a one-way street. This concept that we stole the idea is erroneous on two fronts. One, Christianity had a unique claim of the resurrection of Jesus that paganism never held. Secondly, we did not take the idea from paganism, but even if we did, that still doesn't deal with the evidence regarding the resurrection of Jesus. Did he die? Did he rise? It still doesn't address the main issue of the resurrection of Jesus.

I share this with you for this reason: Jesus Christ is alive right now. He's ascended back into heaven. He's seated on a throne. He's ruling as King and Lord and God and Savior. He hears prayers because he's alive. He saves people because he's alive. He knows you because he's alive. He's coming again. He's prepared a place for us because he's alive. Jesus Christ is alive, never to die again. God became a man, lived without sin, died in our place on a cross for our sins, was buried, three days later rose, ascended into heaven, and is returning again to judge the living and the dead and to establish an eternal Kingdom. That's Jesus.

We absolutely believe this at Mars Hill Church. And what I would say for you is that this is not something that you can remain neutral on. This is something that you must for yourself define. "Do I believe Jesus is alive, or do I believe that Jesus is dead?" This is the distinguishing feature of what it means to be Christian. Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Christians all agree on this point: It all comes down to the resurrection of Jesus.

Which leads to my final point, what is the hope of the resurrection of Jesus? Here's why it matters. Only Jesus has gone to death and come back to tell us what awaits us on the other side of death. No other major world religion has as its founder or any leader anyone who was resurrected from death. There is no religion that could tell you what happens to you after you die but Christianity, because Jesus alone has died and come back to tell us what awaits us on the other side of the death.

And Jesus speaks of hell more than anyone in the Bible. Jesus speaks of hell more than anyone in the Bible. Jesus is clear that on the other side of death there is judgment. He says this in John's gospel. He says that "the Father has entrusted all judgment to me." What this means is you and I will die. Our body will go into the ground. Our soul will continue to exist, either in a place with God, whereby we are blessed, or in a place separated from God, where we are cursed. There will be a day when all of us experience the rejoining of our spirit, the immaterial aspect of our being, with our body, our physical body. And we will rise from death as Jesus did, in a glorified, resurrected physical body. And we will all stand before Jesus. And we will all be judged by Jesus.

Those who are Christians will receive a judgment of works, meaning God will give them certain dignity and honor in his eternal Kingdom. Non-

Christians will have likewise just punishment and sentencing for the sins they committed in their life as they are sentenced to eternal, conscious, physical torments of hell. I'm not supposed to tell you this, 'cause it's not popular, but it's true. This is what Jesus says. You may say, "But other religions disagree." They disagree with dead guys who are being tormented right now. Be very careful who your God is. Be very careful what your religion is. Be very careful what your eternity is. And what can happen, and what so often happens, is that people are so short-sighted in their thinking. "Ah, I'm living my life. What's the big deal?" Let me tell you this: forever is a long time. Forever is a long time. You will spend it with Jesus in blessing, or with Jesus in torment. You will spend it in a glorified, resurrected physical body, you will live forever as a friend of Jesus – or a foe of Jesus. This is absolutely essential. I want none of you – because I love you, I don't want any of you to just dismiss this. I want you to contend with this and to come to your own conclusion. "Do I belong to Jesus or not? Have I given him my sin or not? Will I rise to be with him or not? Have I trusted in him or not?"

And this has absolutely life-changing implications. First of all, it has personal implications. This, for me, radically transforms the way I perceive death. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 that apart from Jesus, death is an enemy. You know what? I'm not scared to die. I've got a beautiful wife. I've got five kids. I love this church. I love what God has me doing. But you know what? I don't worry about dying. I don't worry about it. I have asked God, "Let me outlive my wife so that I can preach her funeral and look after her all the days of her life." But if I should die prematurely, when I die, you know what? I know exactly what's gonna happen. I don't sweat it. I'll stand before Jesus. I know that he died for my sins and I belong to him. And I know that I'll spend forever with him in perfection. I know that, and I know that I'll see my wife. My kids love Jesus – I know I'll see my kids.

Death is not the big deal that it once was because of Jesus. It changes everything. It means you can actually live your life with freedom and joy and passion, knowing that you will die but knowing that you will rise, and that resurrection life is actually better than this life. There'll be no sickness, no pain, no disease, no cancer, no injustice, no evil, no tyranny, and no war.

Secondly, this gives us a collective hope. You know, in the course of my ministry, I'm going to bury a lot of you. The campus pastors are going to bury a lot of you. And if you know Jesus, that's gonna change the way we all remember your life, the way we embrace your death, and the kind of hope that it gives to all of us. I think my daughter Alexie, when she was two, said it best. Someone we knew died, and I was trying to explain it to her. She said, "Oh, it's like they moved to California, and now they get to go to Disneyland whenever they want." (Laughter) To her that was dying in faith, (Laughter) but it's not death, it's moving to a different place in a different condition, both of which are better.

Number three, what I find so interesting is that sin and its effects are deeply hated by people who don't even know Jesus. See, because sin has physical effects – it affects creation. Environmentalists wished we'd take better care of the gift that's been entrusted to us. It affects nations, so there is injustice and poverty and evil and tyranny. It affects individuals, so that they're sinned against and they're abused and they're marginalized and they're harmed and they're victimized. And people are sick and dying and money goes toward cancer and naturopathy and homeopathy and exercise and diet and health and nutrition and safety. I praise God that there's a world after this one. Now, in this world here's what I do believe: we should work for health. We should work for equality. We should work for justice. We should work for mercy. We should work for stewardship. But I know that as long as there is sin, this will never be heaven. It doesn't matter how much we spent, it doesn't matter who we elect, it doesn't matter how loudly we protest, it doesn't matter how passionately we try. There's still sin, the curse, death, and its effects.

And what I love about the resurrection of Jesus, it shows me, it shows me, it shows me what is to come. People resurrected in glorified bodies with no sickness, no pain, no suffering, no death. Jesus ruling and reigning over a new creation with no curse, with none of the effects of sin – a perfect creation, not polluted or contaminated in any way. People living together in harmony and love across racial lines, across generational lines, across socioeconomic lines, across gender lines, across political lines, across national lines, across linguistic lines, across cultural lines. The world that everyone wants is ahead of us, and it's with Jesus.

And if you long for that world, you need to know that that desire in you comes from Jesus. And you should work diligently in this life so that this world and your life look like that. But if all of your hope is here, you will be disappointed. You will die. The world will still have the effects of sin and the curse. And you will be angry and bitter and disappointed and frustrated – unless you know Jesus. And then you will die in hope. You will die in faith. You will die to resurrected, new life. You will experience the world as God intended it, forever with him and his people. And our hope is that you would trust in Jesus, and that we would see you there. And that beginning today you would start to live as a citizen of that place in light of his coming so that people would see that the life of Jesus transforms life right now, and it only gets better when this life comes to an end.

I'm gonna go ahead and pray.

Father God, I thank you for my friends. I pray that they would trust in the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus, you are alive! We're meeting on a Sunday 'cause it's the day of your resurrection. We're meeting as the church because we are the people who have been gathered in your wake. We meet with hope in our hearts and songs on our lips because we know that you have defeated Satan, sin, death, hell, and the grave, that you are our triumphant Victor. We know that even though we die, one day we will rise to be with you, to be like you forever. I pray, Lord God, that it would be as friend, not as foe, that it would be for blessing and not judgment, that it would be for salvation and not condemnation. And I pray that my friends would turn from sin and trust in you.

And Jesus, I thank you that this world is not all there is, that you have conquered sin and one day we will experience life with you, where sin is no more. And Jesus, we long for that day. In the meantime we ask for the grace to live as citizens of your Kingdom, to love, to serve, to care, to give, to labor for the cause of the Kingdom here in the cultures of the earth. We thank you.

And I pray, God, for those that are sick, those that are dying, those that are struggling, those that are weak, those that are frail, those who wake up with aches and pains, those who know that death is imminent and they die a bit each day. I pray, Lord God, that they would trust in the resurrection of Jesus

and that it would change the way they suffer. As Jesus' suffering was purposeful, so might there's be as well. Amen.

I'll give you a chance to respond at this point. Couple things I would say. If you're not a Christian, you give your life to Jesus and you become a Christian. Secondly, if you'd like prayer – maybe you're sick and you're struggling, or you're dying, or you're hurting – pastors will be available up front to pray for you, to pray for you. You can take communion, which is remembering the broken body and shed blood of Jesus in your place for your sins if you're a Christian who's repentant. Additionally, we ask you to give of your tithes and offerings in the baskets or online so that the work of ministry in this church can continue. If you're not a Christian we're not asking for your money. But for those who are Christians, the truth is, this is not the most faithful campus and we're getting killed financially, so we would ask you to consider your giving to your church and Jesus, and to be good, faithful, and generous stewards.

Lastly, we're going to ask you to stand and what? Sing! And when you stand, think, we're gonna rise together! We're gonna actually not just get out of our seats one day, we're gonna get out of our graves, and we're gonna spend forever together with Jesus as a family. And so in worship today, as you stand, I want you to be thinking about Jesus. So why don't you all stand with me as we respond to him? Good news is he's alive today!