

The Resurrection Makes the Culmination of Redemptive History Possible

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The resurrection provides entrance to eternity. Were it not for the resurrection there would be no final chapter in redemptive history. First, Christ was resurrected as the first fruits of a countless number of redeemed to follow ([1 Corinthians 15:20 - 28](#)). Second, at the culmination of redemptive history the redeemed sing a new song – they were purchased *to God*¹ – a remarkable statement of ownership of redeemed man by God Himself.² In [Revelation 14:3](#) the 144,000 sing the song of the redeemed – these were the saved from the Tribulation from the tribes of Israel. This is the Gospel they preach throughout the earth – the song they sing can also be sung by all the redeemed. In [Rev. 7:9](#) there are countless numbers who were saved from out of all nations because of the testimony of the 144,000. All these including the countless number of the redeemed that are saved during the church age. All this would not be possible except for the resurrection of Christ, the firstborn from the dead ([Colossians 1:18](#), the *prototokos*) and then the resurrection of the righteous in Him. A reading of [1 Corinthians 15:12 - 20](#) would also be helpful. Here Paul discusses the impact of Christ if He were *not* being raised from the dead – that the culmination of redemptive history where countless numbers of the redeemed enter into eternal existence with God would not be a possibility.

The resurrection was the focal message of the early church,

[Acts 2:23 - 31](#); [4:2](#); [4:33](#).

² **They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.**

Acts 4:2 (NIV)

After the death of Christ, His disciples feared for their lives – and well they should. Jesus told them that their lives would be in jeopardy because of Him. So, it was no surprise that when He sought them out it was behind closed doors.³ The account of Jesus meeting the disciples on the way to Emmaus depicts the utter despair they felt because of His death. They had *hoped* that Jesus was the Messiah, not in the sense of trust and confidence but of some reservation but not any degree of assurance – much as one without Christ would *hope* that there was an afterlife and that their good deeds would offer them entrance into that life.

The resurrection of Christ made all the difference to the disciples after the reality of it transformed their lives. After the resurrection became an established fact and after the birth of the church, the disciples could not keep their mouths shut about the resurrection! Please turn to [Acts 2:21 - 36](#). Note the clarity with which Peter spoke even to those might turn on him and kill him. This is not the Peter confronted by the maiden at Jesus' trial. No! The difference was that the resurrection of Christ was a reality in his life both as an established fact and because he was now filled with the Holy Spirit.

There can be no more clarity in the Christian message than preaching the resurrection of Christ and how the disciple, too, can hope confidently in his own resurrection after he dies. The resurrection was the focal point in the early church's message as well it should be today. I've said this before, Christianity is the only faith whose founder is still

alive! Before we leave this point let me refer to [Acts 4:2](#) in that the central message of Christ's resurrection was inextricably linked to the hope in the believer's resurrection **"...proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead..."** (my emphasis). This message was preached boldly even in the face of imprisonment and possible death. Despite this persecution the message of the early church resulted in thousands coming to know Jesus Christ as Savior.

**The resurrection of Christ was referred to in the Old Testament,
[Psalm 16:8 - 10.](#)**

Let's turn to this wonderful passage in Psalm 16. Here we see intertwined the psalmist's personal hope in life beyond the grave and the coming "Holy One." We have to follow this passage to carefully pick up this duality. First let's look at verse 8 – **"I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken."** Here David places his implicit trust in Jehovah. Before we make any comment on the left hand versus the right hand please note that Peter translates this as the LORD being always before the face of David. The right hand? Adam Clarke interprets this as the constant presence and approval of the LORD. David's declaration here is that the LORD is at his right hand to "...strengthen, protect, assist, and comfort..." (—Wesley's Commentary) him. So the tone of this passage is set – the relationship between David and the LORD is inseparable. Now let's look at verses 9 & 10.

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, ¹⁰ because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. Psalms 16:9-10 (NIV)

In this passage, David is overjoyed because there is life after the grave. In fact, the force of *rest* (*heb. shakan*) **"...my body also will rest secure..."** is to dwell safely in. This was the hope of David – this is the hope of the Christian today. The resurrection was a vital part of David's life in his day and so it is to be central in the life of today's believer. But, I must move on. David goes on to say that the LORD will not abandon him in the grave. We need to be reminded that David in his climb from being a mere shepherd boy to King of Israel faced many close calls with death. We need not to enumerate these events but only to know that when David makes mention of the subject of death, he knows from first hand about looking death in the face. This is a powerful statement of trust by David that the LORD will not abandon him in the grave.⁴ But let's see the next phrase: **"...nor will you let your Holy One see decay..."** David is now talking about the Holy One – Jesus Christ (that is plain if we look at Peter's commentary in Acts 2). So even though David's grave is with us today and even though David's body *has*

Strong's Number: 07931	Browse Lexicon
Original Word	Word Origin
שָׁכַן	a primitive root [apparently akin (by transmission) to 07901] through the idea of lodging]
Transliterated Word	TDNT Entry
Shakan	TWOT - 2387
Phonetic Spelling	Parts of Speech
shaw-kan' 𐤑	Verb
Definition	
to settle down, abide, dwell, tabernacle, reside (Qal)	
to settle down to abide to abide, dwell, reside (Piel)	
to make settle down, establish to make or cause to dwell (Hiphil)	
to lay, place, set, establish, settle, fix to cause to dwell or abide	
King James Word Usage - Total: 129	
dwell 92, abide 8, place 7, remain 5, inhabit 4, rest 3, set 2, continue 1, dwellers 1, dwelling 1, miscellaneous 5	

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seen decay, Christ's body has not. Indeed, He was raised and ascended to the Father and reigns today as Lord.

So, on one hand, we see that David and all believers will die. But, on the other hand, their faith in their Savior is that they will be resurrected even as the Holy One was resurrected. This is the faith that bridges from the Old Testament to the New – common in the faith of all true believers is that we will all be resurrected in newness of life in a real body even as Jesus Christ was. This was prophesied and believed by David and countless other OT believers.

The resurrection of saints was prophesied in Old Testament, [Daniel 12:1, 2](#).

¹ "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered. ² Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt..." Daniel 12:1-2 (NIV)

This is a remarkable passage. How rich is the prophetic content! The drama of this vision is fierce – we are seeing an Old Testament reference to the Great Tribulation – it should be a great comfort for the Jew of that future time to note that Michael, the great prince (angel) will arise – a reference of impending action – the action will be of protecting the Jew. We cannot go into great detail here as it is not in the scope of the lesson and we would have to pull in passages from the New Testament to break down the time-line. The important point to note here is that the resurrection of the saints was prophesied in both the Old Testament and the New. What a comfort this is to us all. Although the resurrection was the main theme of the early church, it was not a new theme. Here (probably) Gabriel has been sent to Daniel to comfort him with these amazing words. The amazing words are that believers will see life after death and they will see life with *real eyes* and the rest of a resurrected body – not some disembodied spirit but a real body.

The Resurrection of Christ Is the Focal Point of the Gospel, [Rom 10:9](#).

⁹ That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9 (NIV)

This was and is the central thrust of the Gospel. Not social change – not a comfort that is grasped at the Christian grave side, but a dynamic that affects every day of the believer in Christ. Without the preaching of the Gospel – this message of faith in the resurrected Christ – there is no salvation, there is no hope, confidence in the Lord.

The Resurrection of Christ and the Saints Are Foundational to the Reality of
Christianity, [1 Cor 15:12 - 18](#).

and if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in
your sins. 1 Cor 15:17 (KJV).

Paul placed so much importance on the resurrection of the dead that he made it the very foundation of the Faith of Christianity. There is no place for spiritualizing or making the resurrection of the dead some sort of allegory. Foundational to the Christian faith is the literal resurrection of the dead. The faith of the spiritualizing or the allegorical approach the resurrection is a vain faith. Vain here (*gk. Mataios*) it to be of no force – no power – impotent. This would place Christianity on the same level of other religions. Religion is basically devoid of any force. Christianity, based on the reality of the resurrection of Christ is powerful, life-changing and ultimately the only source of Truth.⁵

Strong's Number: 3152	Browse Lexicon
Original Word	Word Origin
ΜΑΤΑΙΟΣ	from the base of 3155
Transliterated Word	TDNT Entry
Mataios	4:519,571
Phonetic Spelling	Parts of Speech
mat'-ah-yos	Adjective
Definition	
1. devoid of force, truth, success, result	
2. useless, of no purpose	
King James Word Usage - Total: 6	
vain 5, vanities 1	

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The resurrection culminates the redemptive plan of God, [Rev 5:5 - 9](#).

⁵ And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. ⁶ And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, **stood a Lamb as it had been slain**, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. ⁷ And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, **having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.** ⁹ And they sung a new song, saying, **Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;** KJV.

Here's where we see the culmination of the redemptive plan. Think if it! The song of the redeemed. And who could sing this glorious song? Only the redeemed. All others in this heavenly scene listed to the melody. All the heartache, all death, all pain, is over now in this heavenly scene. The countless redeemed from every nation, every family, every language has heard the call of the Gospel and responded. They will now be with

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the LORD forever. Who is the Lamb? Who only was worthy to open the book of life? Only Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God – He is standing now a position of action. What was to follow would be on one hand terrible for the rebellious inhabitants of the earth but on the other hand for the redeemed, glorious. Jesus was about to unleash the horrors of the Great Tribulation. He and He alone is standing here to unleash this terrible historical event.

This great vision is the ultimate righting of wrongs – the judgement of God on the unbelieving world. But for the righteous in Christ – the redeemed who were purchased out the world of sin to be possessed by God – this is the

Now, the prayers here are not the prayers of the Beasts or Elders but of the redeemed

beginning of a wonderful eternity with Him. Note the golden vials full of odors: these are the prayers of the saints. It's a wonderful thought that none of those prayers that you and I uttered that seemingly went nowhere were carefully conserved and here in this wonderful imagery are presented to the very throne of Christ! **Now, the prayers here are not the prayers of the Beasts or Elders but of the redeemed** – make no mistake about that. Here we have a look into the worship of the Redeemed – “Thank you Lord for saving our souls – Thank you Lord for making me whole...” and old Gospel chorus comes to mind. Let us remember this next time we question the efficacy of our prayers. Our prayers are valued by the Lord and are a worshipful act by us. Every breath uttered by the redeemed are so valued as to be kept in a golden vial and are presented to the throne of Jesus Christ and risen Lamb.

It is amazing to me that God has put His own Son on the line for you and me. The only explanation I have if found in John 3:16: “**For God so loved the world...**” lit. “For God loved the world *in this way*: that He gave His only Begotten Son.” Thus, to measure the magnitude of God's love, we need only to observe the love that the Father has for His Son.

Endnotes

1. [Rev 5:9](#)

2. Compare this with comments from my previous lesson, [Redemptive History and the 21st Century Introduction](#) , page 3, paragraph 1 & verse 28 bullet.

3. ¹⁹ **Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.** John 20:19 (KJV)

4. Going from the 1st person (“abandon me”) to the 2nd (“your Holy One”). The 1st person can be viewed as a double reference – to David and to Jesus Christ. Some commentators apply this 1st person reference of the grave to David – Peter seems to apply it to Jesus Christ – I prefer to have it refer to both. Boice allows that the 1st person would be “not an impossible statement for any one of the Old Testament saints to have uttered” ([An Expository Commentary, Psalms, Volume 1](#), pg 130). But the 2nd person certainly refers only to Christ, of course, who was not left in the grave to see decay but rather was raised on the third day after His death.

5. **Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.** John 14:6 (NIV)