

THE COMMAND CONNECTED TO CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

INTRODUCTION: We're going to do something a bit different this morning. We are going to pass the microphone around the auditorium and have each of you answer this question: **Why is the resurrection of Jesus important to you?** **Who** wants to start?

I'm not a mind-reader, but my guess is that **some of you** are thinking "I'm not saying anything—and Pastor can't **make me!**" You're right, I can't! By the way, I'm **just kidding**, so please stop hyper-ventilating and looking for the exit door 😊!

If we actually **were to do** something like this, though, I'm guessing that some of us would be tempted to give answers that we **think we should give**—instead of what we **really think!** If we were **brutally honest**, there are probably some that would say "Pastor, the resurrection really **isn't important** to me. I know it **should be**, but I don't know **why.**"

If that is you, I want to give you a **Bible reason** why the resurrection should be important to you. There are **lots of them**—way too many to cover in one sermon—so we will focus on just one. The reason we will be looking at this morning is because there is actually **a command**—from God—connected to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. There are really several; we are looking at probably the most neglected one.

Please take your Bibles and turn to Acts 17, verse 30.

Here we see God commands us **to repent**. What does repent mean? I'll answer that in a little bit.

Now vs 31. Here we see **why** we should repent—because of **judgment day!** And how do **we know** there is a judgment day? Because God has provided proof by **raising Jesus from the dead!**

So we have a **command from God**—connected to the resurrection of Jesus—that God wants us **to know** and, of course, **obey**. **My desire** this morning is to make sure you **know and understand** what the command is—and whether or not it **applies to you**. Hopefully **your desire** is to **learn** the command...and be honest about whether or not it **applies to you**...and **obey it**, if it does!

1. What does it mean to repent

In order to obey God's command to repent, we obviously need to understand what it means. Repentance is not just feeling bad or sorry about something. The drug addict...and alcoholic...and wife abuser often feel **bad or sorry** about what they do, but that is not repentance!

Ryrie defines it like this: "Repentance means a genuine **change of mind** that affects the life in some way" (Basic Theology, 389). In other words, it is a change of mind that leads to a change in direction. We'll see a little later some of the things that they—and us—need to change **our mind about**.

Next, let's consider... **2. Who is commanded to repent**

Notice **vs 16** "Now while Paul waited for them **at Athens...**"

--**Vs 22** "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, **Ye men of Athens...**"

The **immediate** audience—the applicable group—that God is commanding to repent is the people from Athens that Paul is preaching to. But it is not **just for them**. God saw fit to put it **in the Bible**, so it also for us! And **because God put it in His Word**, He wants us to be honest about whether or not "the shoe fits us."

A. Religious people

Look again at vs 22. "Superstitious" is probably **not** the best translation—at least for us to understand. When we hear the word "superstitious," most of us think of some **routine** that someone does in hopes that it will **bring them good luck**. Athletes will **eat certain foods** at certain times...or put their **uniform on in a certain order**...or **bounce the ball a certain number** of times before shooting a free-throw. I remember as a teenage basketball player, someone came up with the idea that if we wore **one color sock on one foot**—and a **different color sock** on the other foot—that that would bring us "good" luck!

Most of us have heard—or used—the expression "knock on wood." That is a **superstitious way** of hoping we can fend off bad luck. 'This or that hasn't happened to me—yet—knock on wood!'

Paul is not accusing the Athenians of believing too much *in luck*—he is accusing them of believing in *too many gods*! Historians tell us that there were probably about **30,000 idols** in Athens when Paul visited there—but only **10,000 people**! In fact, a common saying at the time was that you are “more likely to meet a **god** [little “g”] in Athens than a **man!**” (Cole; Lesson 44: Reaching Intellectuals for Christ; Bible.org).

What about us? Can we have more than one god? Before you answer that question, think about these questions: **Who** do you *serve*? If the priority in your life *is you*, you are in a sense **your God**! Jesus warned people against having two masters in **Mt 6:24** “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

Q2: **Where** do you go to for *truth*? If you count on **your wisdom**—if you determine truth based on what makes sense **to you**—you have made you and your wisdom **a god**.

So I’ll ask the question again: **Do you** have more than one god in your life? If so, you need to repent!

Let’s notice a second characteristic of the Athenians and see whether or not it applies to us.

They weren’t just **religious** people; they were also...

B. Worshipping people

Notice the end of vs 23: “Whom therefore ye ignorantly **worship**, Him declare I unto you.”

The people of Athens that Paul was addressing were **worshippers**. They worshipped ignorantly—they didn’t know who the true God was or how to worship Him—but they **were worshippers**!

In the end of vs 24, we see Paul telling them that **the true God** “dwelleth not in temples made with hands.” Look at vs 25. Paul tells them that **the true God** is not “worshipped with men’s hands...” Why? Because you are treating God as if He **needs things from you**! Paul reminds them that **God doesn’t need things from us**—we need things **from Him**! He is the giver of life...and breath...and all things!

Now vs 29. “Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device.”

--Paul here is saying, ‘You are offspring of God. You are created by God and in God’s image. Since **you live** and breathe and feel and think, why do you think **God is lifeless**—and like a piece of art—formed by your imagination—from gold, silver, or stone? He is **like you**—only a gazillion times greater!’

--Can people **worship** God wrongly? They obviously can! The people in Athens were—and Paul was trying to correct them. What about us now in this day and age? Are there people now that worship God wrongly? There sure are!

--For some people, worship is all about the **beauty of the building**.

--For other people, worship is all about what **they do**—the **works of their hands**. It is about their efforts. So they are baptized at a certain age...and catechized at a certain age...and learn special rituals and routines. They aren’t sure why, but that is what they do!

--And yet others believe that worship requires the **creation of something** to worship. Instead of an idol to a Greek god (little g), though, it may be the likeness of a saint—or even of Jesus!

Don’t do that, Paul says to them—and to us! If you **are doing that**, you need to repent—you need to change your mind and change your direction!

There is yet a third group of people that Paul addresses; I’m calling them... C. Misinformed people

We see that in vs 23. “For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions” – the idols and objects of your worship – “I found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.’”

The history behind this “altar To the Unknown God” is quite interesting. MacArthur and others point out that about 600 years prior to this, there was a plague in Athens. Hundreds of people were getting sick and dying. Because of their belief in **multiple gods**—and their misunderstanding of the **true God**—a poet by the name of Epimenides came up with a plan to find out **which** of their many “gods” was angry.

The plan? Let sheep loose in the city! The gods that were angry would presumably “draw” the sheep to their temple to show **they were** the angry one. The people would then **sacrifice the sheep** to that god. In their way of thinking, once the sheep were sacrificed to the angry god(s), the plague would end!

Did that happen? Obviously not! Idols—and the false gods they represented—have no life! They cannot be angry—or happy—and certainly cannot “call” or “draw” sheep over to them! So a number of sheep did what **any smart sheep** would do—go to a nice grassy spot to eat and sleep! And since there were no idols close by, they sacrificed the sheep in those spots and built an altar “To the Unknown God.” Paul was obviously referring to one of these altars he noticed while walking around the city (Ashamed of the Gospel, 145-146).

Think about the significance of them building an altar “To the Unknown God.” In essence, they were admitting that there was a God that they **might not know about**—and that they did not understand. So what does Paul do? Since they are **misinformed**, he wants to **inform** them; he wants to **teach them**.

We see that in the end of vs 23 “Whom therefore ye **ignorantly worship**, Him declare I unto you.” ‘You have a God that is **unknown** to you, but He is **known** to me—and I’m going to tell you about Him!’

And that brings us to ... **3. What it was that the Athenians—and us—need to change our minds about**
So what was it that God wanted these religious philosophers in Athens—and by extension us—to change their minds about? The sermon Paul gives to inform them of the God they do not know is fascinating—to me anyway!

First, Paul started with God as the Creator—**like the beginning** of the Bible does—and ends with **God as Judge**—again, just like the Bible does!

Second, Paul showed who the true God is. He is the **Creator** (vss 24 and 26), the **Sovereign Ruler** over heaven and earth (vss 24 and 26); the **Giver and Sustainer** of life (vss 25 and 28); and that He is every where present (vs 27).

But underneath it all, Paul continues to bring up this point: God **can be known**—and wants to be known! We already saw that in vs 23; look at vs 27 “That they should seek the Lord, if haply [perhaps] they might feel after Him, **and find Him**, though He be not far from every one of us.”

Here we see that God can be **sought**—and found—because He is not far away from every one—meaning anyone—of us.

--Vs 30 “And the times of this ignorance God **winked at**”—meaning overlooked. In essence, Paul was saying that the time of God overlooking their ignorance for not knowing about Him **was over**; it is past.

Paul told the Athenians—**before the Bible** was even completed—that they had **no excuse** for not knowing the true God! If **they** had no excuse—how much more is that **true of us**!

4. Why we need to repent

So **why** do we need to repent? Why does God **command us** to change our mind about who He is—and that He can be known? We have the answer—plain as day—in verse 31. We’ve looked at it once already, but here it is again. Vs 31 “Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world...”

A. God has appointed a day of judgment

We see it here in this verse—and we see it elsewhere in God’s Word.

Hebrews 9:27 “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this **the judgment:**”

Revelation 20:11-12 “And I saw a **great white throne**, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, **stand before God**; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the **dead were judged** out of those things which were written in the books, **according to their works.**”

We often say the only thing certain in life are “death and taxes.” There is one thing even **more certain** than **both of those**—each of us standing before God some day!

B. God has appointed a way of judgment

Back to vs 31 “Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world...” **how?**

In righteousness. God is going to judge the world in righteousness. What does that mean?

First, I believe it refers to **how the judgment** is conducted. The judgment will be equal...it will be fair...it will be just and right. There will be no errors—and no favoritism. It will be to the highest degree of accuracy and fairness. **Every right** will be rewarded; **every wrong** will be punished. That’s the good news...sort of...

The **bad news?** I believe *in righteousness* also refers to the **standard** of judgment. The standard—the measuring stick—will be in *righteousness*—meaning perfection! When we are judged, we aren't compared to the goodness or righteousness of others—we are compared to the standard that God demands—and that is **perfection**. The reality, of course, is that all of us fall short of the standard of perfection!
Eccl 7:20 “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.”
Is 64:6 reminds us “But we are all as an unclean thing, and **all our righteousnesses** are as filthy rags...”
Rom 3:23 “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Not a pleasant picture, is it? There is a day of judgment—appointed by God—whereby God will judge **you** fairly and justly—against a **perfect** standard. It is **not** a scale where your good and bad deeds are weighed out. Instead, it is measuring **your goodness** against the perfectness of Jesus! And I think you'd agree we are **all disqualified!** Everyone of us will be found **guilty and condemned!**

And so, we need to repent—we need change our mind—not only about the fact that **God can be known**, but also about the **coming judgment day**. We need to stop believing what **we think** the judgment **might** be like—and start believing **what God declares** the judgment **will** be like.

The most important “thing” we need to change our mind about, though, is actually **not a thing**—it is a Person, and His name is Jesus! Why do we need to change our mind about Jesus? Because... C. God has ordained Jesus the man of judgment

How do we know it's Jesus? Because Jesus is the One God raised from the dead! There are two aspects of Jesus being ordained—appointed—as the man of judgment.

i. Jesus was appointed the Judge by the Father

We see that truth here in vs 31, of course. God will “judge the world in righteousness by”—meaning through—“that man whom He hath ordained.” In other words, God has made Jesus the Judge!

John 5:22 “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath **committed all judgment unto the Son:**”

Acts 10:42 “And He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He which was **ordained of God to be the Judge** of quick and dead.”

II Tim 4:1 “I charge thee therefore before God, and the **Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead** at His appearing and His kingdom;”

God has appointed Jesus as the Judge and we know that judgment will happen because Jesus is alive; He has risen from the dead! A **dead** judge cannot bring judgment—but the living Son of God certainly can!

Jesus is not just the appointed Judge, though! **ii. Jesus was appointed the Mediator by the Father**

I Tim 1:5-6 “For there is one God, and one **mediator** between God and men, the **man Christ Jesus;** ⁶Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” Let's think through this. How many Gods? **One!**

How many mediators—how many people intervene between us and God to reconcile our differences? **One! Who** is it? Jesus! **How** did Jesus intervene for us? By giving Himself a ransom for us!

And that is what the crucifixion and resurrection is all about! Jesus took the penalty of our sin—upon Himself—and died in our place. And on top of that, He then provides us with **His righteousness!**

Is 61:10 “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, **He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness,**”

II Cor 5:21 “For He [God] hath made Him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we **might be made the righteousness** of God in Him.”

I know this is a lot to try to keep straight, so let me see if I can recap it for us. God has appointed a day of judgment whereby the Judge will be Jesus—and the standard will be perfection. That's the **bad** news!

The **good** news is that God sent **that same Jesus** to die in our place—then proved He accepted Jesus' payment for our sins by raising Him from the dead!

And so Jesus is **not only the Judge**—He also **paid the payment** required by the Judge! And that is why God commands us to repent; to change our mind about who **Jesus is**—and what **Jesus did!**

Lastly—and quickly—notice the responses.

--Vs 32 "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked"

--Mid of 32 "...and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter." In other words, they remained undecided.

--Vs 34 "Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed"

What about you? What do you believe about Jesus? Do you believe He rose from the dead, proving that God accepted the payment He made for your sins? Do you believe that you need Him as your Savior?

If not, you need to repent—change your mind about Him—and call upon Him to forgive you and save you. Don't be a mocker—and don't be a procrastinator!

So, what would God have us do in light of His Word this morning?

1. First, be honest about who Jesus is to you. God has appointed Him as Judge—but God also offers Him to us as our Savior. Jesus is alive and conquered death so you will meet Him one way or the other.

--Meet Him as judge, you will be banned from heaven and condemned for all eternity.

--Receive Him as Savior, and you will be forgiven—and allowed entrance into heaven!

Your eternal destiny hinges on what you do with Jesus.

2. For those of us who have Jesus—and therefore have forgiveness—do you love Him? Do you obey Him? Do you serve Him? Do you praise Him for what He did for you?