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Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

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Prophecies of the Resurrection

Various Texts

I. Worldwide Fear of Death

We live in an amazingly diverse world... and with the development of technology that brings images from all over the world right to our hands by means of smartphones, we can see the diverse ways people live

Human culture is wide and varied all over the world... different rituals and artistic patterns in language, food, clothing, music, holidays, architecture

But one thing unites us all: FEAR OF DEATH

In 1973 Ernest Becker wrote a Pulitzer Prize winning book called *The Denial of Death*. The thesis of the book was that humanity is enslaved worldwide by fear of dying. And what human beings do all over the world is to deny it, deny, deny, deny, deny. People find many different ways to do this denial: religious ways, alcoholic or narcotic ways, work ways, family ways, beautiful ways, surgery ways to take ten years off.

Becker says "The main thesis of this book is that the fear of death haunts the human animal like nothing else. It is a mainspring of human activity, activity designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that it is the final destiny for man."

Ernest Becker has no answer, and neither does any scientist or author or philosopher or artist on earth. But the Bible does! And it begins on this topic by agreeing that the human race is enslaved by fear of death, but that Christ crucified and resurrected has destroyed death and freed all who believe in him

Hebrews 2:14-15 by [Christ's] death he destroyed him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil-- ¹⁵ and freed those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

All over the world, death is known as "the final enemy"; funeral rituals involve immense lamentations and overwhelming grief.

It's really very simple: a certain person is alive; you know him by name and by his face; he is a part of your life; you eat with him, talk with him, enjoy his company, laugh at his jokes, work together with him on some project... he is woven into your life. But then, suddenly, something happens and you never see him alive again. Maybe you see his dead body, maybe you don't. But one thing you know... that person is gone, and you never see him in this world again. That is the experience of death.

every culture, every nation, every tribe... subject to death

no refuge on this planet... no one has found a way to escape death's clutches

- Distant mist-covered valleys of Irian Jaya: there's no valley there where they have the secret to escaping death
- Far reaches of the barren outback of Australia: no hidden cave where some small clan of aborigines has escaped death
- Teeming bustling metropolitan centers of Asia: population density on many thousands per square mile; modern hi-rises of steel and glass... easy to get lost in the throngs... yet there's no small alleyway where some aged Oriental expert in herbs and arcane remedies has found the secret to escaping death
- Farmlands of the Ukraine... people live an agrarian life harvesting wheat under the blue sky, and yet they die without remedy
- In the frozen reaches of northern Finland, the Laplanders all succumb to death
- In the steamy jungles of the Amazon, no tribe has found a way to escape death
- No, not in the mountainous monasteries of Tibet, where Buddhist monks named Lamas claim to have found the secret to endless physical life
- Not even in Durham, NC, the "City of Medicine," where billions of dollars are spent every year on pharmaceutical research and the development of non-invasive surgical techniques that are the envy of the world... not even here have we found the remedy to death

This brings us to the celebration that unites Christians all over the world... Jesus Christ has risen from the dead... actually, physically risen after he died. And he's the only one! The leader of no other religion has ever claimed to raise himself from the dead

Christ alone has defeated death... and he alone claims to have absolute power over death:

John 10:17-18 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life-- only to take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

Revelation 1:18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

Not only that, he claims to be able to GIVE THAT POWER to us!!

John 14:19 Because I live, you also will live.

John 11:25-26 "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶ and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

But, we may ask... how can we be CERTAIN that all this is true? How can we who live in the 21st century in a hi-tech, digital age, in a radically different culture, know for certain that Christ rose from the dead, and that we can rise from the dead ourselves?

The only certainty any of us can have about an unseen thing like this is the certainty of FAITH... and FAITH comes by hearing the Word of God

The Bible is given to us to enable us to believe that Christ died for sins and rose from the dead for our eternal life:

John 20:31 these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name

But, you may say, there are MANY HOLY BOOKS... with some powerful teachings about life and morality and God... what makes the Bible different?

The central difference between the Bible and the Hindu writings (like the Baghavat Gita) and the Muslim writings (the Koran) and the Analects of Confucius, the Sutras of Buddhism... are the predictive prophecies that the Bible alone contains

II. "This is What is Written"

The Jewish religion was founded on SCRIPTURE... the writings of Moses and the Prophets... for centuries they read the Old Testament as God's Holy Word... as Moses said centuries before that:

Deuteronomy 32:47 They are not just idle words for you-- they are your life.

Not only did Jewish scripture contain the laws by which the Jewish nation was to live, it also contained God's predictions about the future:

Isaiah 46:9-10 I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. ¹⁰ I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

So, the central event in human history and also in Jewish history was the life, death and resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus, the Savior of the World... therefore, it is reasonable to expect it to be predicted in the Scriptures... and Jesus showed that it was:

Luke 24:44-48 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.

- A. Jesus Continued to teach the apostles over a period of forty days
- B. The greatest seminary in history

Acts 1:3 After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

- C. What Scriptures Did He Share With Them?? Can They Feed Our Faith in the Resurrection as Well?

III. The Three Greatest Prophecies of Christ's Resurrection

A. Psalm 16

1. This is the one Peter quoted on the Day of Pentecost
2. Peter's context:
 - a. The Day of Pentecost, one of the major festivals of Israel's year; the celebration of the firstfruits of the harvest
 - b. Thousands of Jews had travelled from all over the Roman world to be in Jerusalem for Passover and Pentecost
 - c. Christ was crucified on Passover Friday and was buried just before the Sabbath; he was raised to life on the day after the Sabbath, the first day of the week

- d. For forty days, Jesus had met with the disciples teaching them the word of God as we saw; Jesus told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the gift of the Holy Spirit to be poured out on them from heaven
- e. Then Jesus ascended to heaven, and the church waited in the upper room in Jerusalem
- f. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came powerfully on the assembled church in the Upper Room with the noise of a violent wind... that sound attracted a huge crowd to the streets around where the disciples were staying
- g. Peter and the other apostles stood up to address the huge crowd, and the people were amazed at hearing each of them speaking in their own native languages
- h. Peter spoke to these people who were eyewitnesses of Christ's life and miracles... verse 22 says that they had seen with their own eyes the amazing signs and wonders Christ had done

Acts 2:22 "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

- i. Peter lays the blame for his death right at their feet in verse 23... they had seen Jesus' miracles and God had handed Jesus over to them by his predestined purpose and they had put him to death by the hands of wicked men

Acts 2:23 This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

- j. Peter then declared the greatest good news in human history:

Acts 2:24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

Acts 2:32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.

- k. And not only that, Christ's resurrection had been predicted by the Prophet David a thousand years before that in Psalm 16

Acts 2:25-28 David said about him: "I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. ²⁶ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, ²⁷ because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. ²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.'

3. Peter's Use of Psalm 16

- a. Psalm 16 had been written by King David over a thousand years before that time
- b. David wrote these words speaking of the defeat of death and decay at the grave... "You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay"
- c. Peter makes the point that David was NOT speaking of himself, because David himself died and was buried and his body decayed

Acts 2:29 "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day.

- d. So what did his words mean? Who would it be that God would not allow to see decay? Peter explains it clearly

Acts 2:30-31 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay.

- e. "Seeing what was ahead!!" This is the essence of the supernatural power in the Scriptures... the ability to SEE WHAT WAS AHEAD... to declare in words something that would not be fulfilled for another 1000 years... the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave
- f. It is this testimony that gives us the greatest certainty that Christianity is true, and that Christ has risen from the dead... no other religion has these kinds of predictive prophecies; and they do not center on unimportant things like stock market prices and who will win a Presidential election or who will win the NCAA basketball championship... but on the most important issue of all: How can sinners like us defeat the grave and live forever?

B. Psalm 22

1. Written by King David 1000 years before Jesus was born
2. Jesus quoted its first line from the cross

Psalm 22:1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

3. It is a clear prediction of the physical sufferings of Christ on the cross
4. It is also a clear prediction of the triumphs of Christ over death

5. Listen to how accurately David depicted crucifixion centuries before the Assyrians invented it

Psalm 22:14-18 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. ¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. ¹⁶ Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. ¹⁷ I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. ¹⁸ They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.

Many details were fulfilled in Christ's death... including his garments being gambled over

But especially amazing are these words:

Psalm 22:14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint.

Psalm 22:16 they have pierced my hands and my feet.

There is little doubt that these words were a prophecy of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross by crucifixion

6. Listen also to the triumphal tone of the end of the Psalm

Psalm 22:22-25 I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you. ²³ You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! ²⁴ For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help. ²⁵ From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you will I fulfill my vows.

Psalm 22:29-31 All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him-- those who cannot keep themselves alive. ³⁰ Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. ³¹ They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn-- for he has done it.

C. Isaiah 53

1. If Psalm 22 describes accurately HOW Jesus died, Isaiah 53 describes just as accurately WHY Jesus died
2. What's just as amazing: this detailed prophecy was written by Isaiah the prophet seven centuries before Jesus was born!

Jesus' death was as a substitute for our sins... by his death on the cross, all who trust in him are forgiven of our sins

This couldn't be clearer than in these words:

Isaiah 53:5-6 He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Details of his death were also depicted

Isaiah 53:7-9 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. ⁹ He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

3. But just as his death and burial were predicted in Isaiah 53, so also was his resurrection:

Isaiah 53:10-11 though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. ¹¹ After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was clearly predicted in these three prophecies... Psalm 16, Psalm 22, and Isaiah 53

But what about US? What about OUR resurrection from the dead?

Well, the Old Testament makes some amazing predictions about that as well!

II. The Three Greatest Prophecies of Our Resurrection

A. Isaiah 25-26

Isaiah wrote not only about the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ... but also of the way that all the redeemed that Christ died for would also rise from the grave as well...

Isaiah 25:6-8 On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine-- the best of meats and the finest of wines. ⁷ On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; ⁸ he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.

Isaiah 26:19 But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead.

In picturesque language, Isaiah writes of a lavish feast, more sumptuous and delicious than you can possibly imagine... the "best of meats and the finest of wines"

He speaks of the guests at the feast... there is a WORLDWIDE guest list:

Five times in these verses, the UNIVERSALITY of the salvation that God is working from death is made plain

Isaiah 25:6 On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples

Isaiah 25:7 all peoples, all nations

Isaiah 25:8 The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces

Isaiah 25:8 he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth

This banquet, this rich lavish banquet, is clearly from people from every tribe and language and people and nation

What is the nature of this feast? The image changes, not from what WE will EAT but what WILL BE SWALLOWED UP FOREVER... and that is DEATH!

Isaiah predicts that the SHROUD that enfolds and covers up all nations, that produces SHAME and DISGRACE for all peoples, that brings tears to the faces of all nations will be DESTROYED FOREVER

Death itself will be SWALLOWED UP in victory!

This is the abundant banquet that Easter spreads for us... Jesus' resurrection victory over death is a lavish celebration for us who were covered and wrapped in a shroud like a motionless corpse... Jesus said of Lazarus whom he raised from the dead,

John 11:44 "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

B. Job 19:25-27

Job was a godly man who suffered greatly... the loss of all his possessions and his children in a single day, and then, the loss of his health

But these immense sufferings could not shake his trust in God

Job 19:25-27 I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. ²⁶ And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; ²⁷ I myself will see him with my own eyes-- I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Even after the grave has destroyed our skin, and we have been eaten by worms under the earth, yet IN OUR FLESH WE WILL SEE GOD! God has the power to raise our dead bodies from the grave

C. Daniel 12:2-3

Daniel was a prophet who lived six centuries before Jesus was born. God gave him amazing visions of the end of the world... and the greatest promise of all concerned the bodily resurrection of the dead from the grave into eternal glory:

Daniel 12:2-3 Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Daniel 12:13 "As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance."

III. Applications

- A. Come to Christ!
- B. Do Not Fear Death!
- C. Live for God's Glory!
- D. Spread the Message!