

If resurrection than judgment!
Acts 17:22-34

Prayer for illumination-

Sermon introduction-

The American Philosophical Association is the most prestigious philosophical society in the world. Imagine that they are meeting in Spokane next weekend.

You have been asked to address the entire group on the subject of Christianity. What would you say???

Since you have attended Sunday school the last few weeks...

You could talk about the classic proofs for God's existence (origin, design, and morality).

You could talk about fulfilled prophecy in the Bible.

You could talk about how Christianity has been the greatest source of good in the world.

You could mention many other things...

What would you say?

What would you focus on?

What would the apostle Paul focus on? We don't have to guess.

He was asked to address a similar body of scholars in Acts 17.

The Epicurean and Stoic philosophers heard Paul speak. As a result they asked him to address the court of **Areopagus (show slide)**.

In Paul's day, the court of the Areopagus was the most prestigious group of thinkers in Greece, if not the world. All they did was stand around and debate the latest ideas. They were *the* experts in religion, philosophy, politics, and education.

What did Paul say to these cultural elites? Paul talked about the day of final judgment and the resurrection.

More specifically he argued that ***final judgment is certain because of the resurrection!!!***

To help us understand Paul's message, we are going to look at-

The nature of final judgment

The certainty of final judgment

The responses to final judgment

First, the nature of final judgment

Let me ask a couple of questions...

When will we be judged? The day of final judgment!

Acts 17:30–31 (ESV) — 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, **31** because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness....”

According to verse 31, God has fixed a day when he will judge the world. Other parts of the Bible, refer to this as the day of final judgment. It will happen right after Christ returns in glory.

When Christ came to earth the first time, he came in humility! But, when Christ comes again, he will come in glory to judge the nations.

The last book of the Bible uses metaphorical language to describe what Christ will look like when he comes to judge the world.

Revelation 19:11–16 (ESV) — 11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. **12** His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. **13** He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. **14** And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. **15** From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. **16** On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

We must remember Christ as the humble child in the manger
We must remember Christ who fed the five thousand
We must remember Christ who healed the sick, raised the dead, and cast out demons
We must remember Christ as the suffering servant on the cross

Yet, we must also remember that Christ, the holy, righteous, all powerful, all knowing, all wise king, will return to judge the living and the dead.

He will consume his enemies with his wrath!!!

When will we be judged? The day of final judgment

Who will be judged? Everyone!

Acts 17:30–31 (ESV) — 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, **31** because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness....”

The whole world (“all people everywhere”) will be judged. Everyone who has ever lived will stand before the greatest tribunal in cosmic history.

Young and old
Rich and poor
Religious and irreligious
Americans and Russians
Japanese and Ethiopians

People that lived 10,000 years ago and peopled that will live 500 years from now.

All of us will stand before God on the day of final judgment.

When will we be judged?

Who will we be judged?

How will we be judged? In righteousness

Acts 17:31 (ESV) — 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed;...

In other words, God will judge all of us with perfect equity. You may be thinking, no problem, I have been a pretty good person. The problem is that God's standard of judgment is not your neighbor, Mother Teresa, or Billy Graham. The standard of God's judgment is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was perfect and God requires us to be perfect and none of us are.

Objection and transition...

At this point you may be thinking, "Dave, you are crazy. We live in the 21st century. When we die we cease to exist. There is no such thing as final judgment. How in the world do you expect me to believe in final judgment in the age of space travel?"

This brings us to the next point...

First, the nature of final judgment

Second, the certainty of final judgment

How do we know that final judgment is certain? The resurrection!

Acts 17:31 (ESV) — 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

What is Paul saying? Jesus will return to judge the world and the certainty of this happening is the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. In other words, if Jesus rose from the dead final judgment is certain.

Illustration-

Ben Franklin said, "Two things are certain; death and taxes."

Why are taxes certain in this country???

Last time I checked America was 28 trillion dollars in debt... and that was before the most recent 1.9 trillion dollar "American Rescue Plan." Our nations spending is totally out of control!!!

But what is a trillion???

Let's measure a trillion in time

How Long Ago Is a Trillion Seconds? If you count backwards...

1 million seconds = 12 days ago

1 billion seconds = 31 years ago

1 trillion seconds = 30,000 B.C.

Let's measure a trillion in height

In decades past, our government printed thousand-dollar bills. In thousand-dollar bills...

1 million dollars = 4 inches high

1 billion dollars = 364 feet high

1 trillion dollars = 63 miles high

Note that this is a STACK, not laid end-to-end.

If a person's salary is \$40,000 per year it would take:

25 years to earn \$1 Million

25 Thousand years to earn \$1 Billion

25 Million years to earn \$1 Trillion

America is 28 trillion dollars in debt, that is roughly \$85,000 per person in America.

Why are taxes certain? Our government spends way too much money. It is repaid in the form of taxes.

Yet there is something even more certain than death and taxes—final judgment!!! The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead makes this certain.

How do we know that final judgment is certain? Because Jesus rose from the grave!

But how do we know that Jesus rose from the grave? The evidence!

We could look at many lines of evidence. I will mention a few.

There is evidence from eyewitness testimony-

1 Corinthians 15:3–6 (ESV) — 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, **5** and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. **6** Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

This eyewitness testimony is written down in the pages of the Bible—the most historically reliable document ever written.

The Bible's truthfulness has been vindicated over and over again through archeology, history, science, and textual criticism. Not to mention hundreds of fulfilled prophecies.

No other book in human history has been scrutinized like the Bible, yet thousands of scholars and billions of Christians still believe it is trustworthy and true.

There is also evidence from skeptics-

Over the years many scholars have set out to disprove the resurrection. The list of scholars who changed their mind halfway through their research is growing.

Lee Stroebel
Frank Morrison
J. Warner Wallace

Here is a recent example of one such scholar. He writes,

“I was a committed atheist when I first heard a pastor preach a sermon that described the resurrection of Jesus. This pastor seemed to actually believe Jesus rose from the dead and was still alive today. I assumed it was just another example of “blind faith”; another well-intentioned church leader believing something for which he had no supporting evidence. . . I was familiar with the rules of evidence and the process by which we can determine the truth about past events. As a detective, I was doing this for a living. I decided to investigate the resurrection as I would any unsolved case from the distant past. My journey led me out of atheism to the truth of Christianity.” (Wallace, *Alive*, 4).

There is also evidence from Jewish monotheism-

Within weeks of the resurrection over 10 thousand Jews converted to Christ. (Habermas)

This is a massively significant historical fact, in light of the fact that all of the Jews at the time believed that worshipping a man (Jesus) was a sin worthy of capital punishment.

Furthermore some of these Jews were members of Jesus family!!! Even they believed in the resurrection and the full deity of Jesus.

Evidence from the eyewitnesses

Evidence from skeptics

Evidence from Jewish monotheism

I'm just scratching the surface...

In light of all the evidence for the resurrection one author makes the point that-

“Christianity is the world’s most falsifiable religion, yet it survived...”

The believer in the **Islamic faith** has to trust in a private encounter Muhammad had, and this encounter is unable to be tested historically.

We have no way to truly investigate the claims of **Joseph Smith** (and when we do, they are found wanting).

Buddhism and Hinduism are not historic faiths, meaning they don’t have central claims of events in time and space which believers are called upon to investigate. You either adopt their philosophy or you don’t. There is no objective way to test them. Run through every religion that you know of and you will find this to be the case: Either it does not give historic details to the central event, the event does not carry any worldview-changing significance, or there are no historic events which form the foundation of the faith.” (Michael Patton, *Now that I am a Christian*)

Every religion but Christianity you must accept on blind faith. In other words, you cannot verify it or falsify it. On the other hand, Christianity's truthfulness is based on historical events that can be tested or falsified. In other words, Christianity is the only world religion that is historically defensible.

The evidence for Jesus Christ resurrection from the grave is overwhelming.

So what.... Jesus rose from the grave!!! How does that affect me? If Jesus rose from the grave he will return to judge the world in righteousness. Are you ready for that day?

This brings us to the last point...

First, the nature of final judgment

Second, the certainty of final judgment

Third, the response to final judgment

The author of Acts describes three responses to Paul's speech about final judgment and the resurrection in Acts 17

Some mocked!

Acts 17:32 (ESV) — 32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked....”

One contemporary paraphrase of the Bible says...

Acts 17:32 At the phrase “raising him from the dead,” the listeners split: Some laughed at him and walked off making jokes;.... (The Message)

Paul's speech came to an abrupt end when the audience burst into laughter.

Many scholars point out that the resurrection of the dead was no more believable in Ancient Greece than it is today. In other words, the ancient Greeks were just as skeptical of a bodily resurrection as you may be this morning.

Yet despite this, today 2 billion people worldwide believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Maybe you don't believe. If your right (there is no resurrection) and I'm wrong I have lost nothing. But if I'm right and your wrong you will spend all eternity separated from God. Doesn't this imply that the truthfulness of Christianity is at least worth investigating.

Some mocked

Some wanted more!

Acts 17:32 (ESV) — 32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.”

Maybe this is you this morning. I would strongly encourage you to investigate the claims of Jesus Christ. There is nothing more worthy of study.

Start by reading the NT.

Then talk to me or the friend who brought you.

Then consider buying a book or two from our bookstore on the evidence for Christianity's truthfulness.

Some mocked

Some wanted more

Some believed!

Acts 17:32–34 (ESV) — 32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." **33** So Paul went out from their midst. **34** But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

According to the great historian Eusebius, Dionysius was the first bishop of Athens...

Do you believe in the resurrection this morning??? What does it mean to believe???

When you believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins and rose from the grave you will be prepared for final judgment. You have nothing to fear.

Since Jesus was judged in your place on the cross instead of fearing final judgment you can look forward to final judgment. On that day, you will look into the face of the one who died on the cross for your sins to save you from eternal judgment.

Since Jesus rose from the grave final judgment is certain.

Since Jesus rose from the grave your salvation can also be certain.

Lets pray...