

ONE WORD: RESURRECTION

One Word: Resurrection

# ONE WORD: RESURRECTION?

## Introduction

If you've ever flown on Air Canada, or Lufthansa, or Air China—you hear a lot of translating going on. We hear the seatbelt instructions in English and then in French. If you fly internationally, you may hear them in several languages. All this for seatbelts. Many people here in church speak another language. It's quite common, especially in countries where immigration was or is common. Canada has its basis on two languages—English and French. Around the world, businesses are translating another language into English, translating English into another language...we want to make sure people understand what they need to know in their own language.

Translating languages is not easy. I've presented in English in front of the European Medicines Agency—imagine if you will, a room full of people, each with their own language listening on earpieces to my words via simultaneous translators while I listen to their comments on my earpiece through the work of a simultaneous translator. We're trying to explain some difficult areas of science, and there is a LOT of languages all spoken at the same time trying to find some commonality. It takes time and it takes skill, because words have meaning.

We can use language loosely. Let me give you an example: You might ask me when I will get back to you with an answer on a specific issue, and I would say in 'a couple of days'. To me that means about 2 days or so. To a person from a German background, that means exactly 48 hours—upon which if I have not given them the information I can expect a phone call! To someone from an Asian cultural background, if I didn't reply early with the information, it would mean that I have intentionally caused disrespect for the other person. You can easily see how tricky this is!

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Words have cultural meaning—the cloud used to mean puffy things over our head, now it also refers to a place to store and share data over the internet, tablets were made of clay or stone, now they are made from silicon and computer chips. Words have cultural impact.

Each time we translate, we have to be careful ensuring the words are correct. It's not as easy as literally translating one word for another—you can end up with some terrible translations that way! [SLIDE]

As you may know, there are a number of translations of the Bible [SLIDE], ranging from literal word for word right to a paraphrase you can see on your right-hand side. I use the English Standard Version mostly, and use the other translations to help me understand what God is saying to me. Each one of these translations has value to us, and illuminates God's word to us.

Most Christians believe that God's word is infallible, and that every word is important, not only to the writer and the culture of the time, but to the reader (that's us) and our culture.

**God's word transcends culture, and language.** John speaks about the importance of the words in Scripture in Revelations 22 [SLIDE]: "...warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book." John is telling us that each word in the Book of Revelation, each sentence, each paragraph is important...not only to the Jews and Gentiles of his time, but to us.

And let me tell you where we're going: we've started talking about Jesus' resurrection, we're going to talk about Psalms, narrow in on Psalm 16, closely look at verse 10, and zoom back out again to Jesus' resurrection. But this is not a history lesson, or some theological meandering. If each word is important—important enough that John warns us about removing

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any of them...it also means that each number, each lengthy description of the Tabernacle or the Temple, each lineage is important. And I'd like us to spend a little time talk about one of those words this morning: Resurrection. And our reason to talk about this one word is to **marvel** at the depth and richness of Scripture, to **meditate** on Scripture to help us in walking closely with Jesus, and to **multiply**—to share with non-believers how the Bible stands up as a text that is reliable.

We take up our story right when the Apostle Peter is addressing the crowd in Jerusalem. This is just after the coming of the Holy Spirit.

READ ACTS 2: 22-33

7 weeks after Jesus' death and resurrection, Peter tells the assembled Jews and Gentiles about salvation—the need to repent and be baptized. And 3,000 come to faith on that day. 3,000. Remember, Peter is an 'unlearned and ignorant' fisherman, who is not eloquent speaks in rough Galilean to the crowd. Listen to how the Biblical Illustrator from the 1900's describes it:

[SLIDE]

“Yet Peter had no tongue of silver, or of honey, no soothing, flattering speech, to allay the prejudices and to captivate the passions of the multitude. Nor had he a tongue of thunder; no outbursts of native eloquence distinguished his discourse. Indeed, some, if they had heard that discourse from ordinary lips, would not have hesitated to pronounce it dry—some of a class, too numerous, who do not like preachers who put them to the trouble of thinking, but enjoy only those who regale their fancy, or move their feelings, without requiring any labour of thought. Peter's sermon is no more than quoting passages from the Word of God, and reasoning upon them; yet, as in this strain he proceeds, the tongue of fire by degrees burns its way to the feelings of the multitude. The murmur

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gradually subsides; the mob becomes a congregation; the voice of the fisherman sweeps from end to end of that multitude, unbroken by a single sound; and, as the words rush on, they act like a stream of fire.”

Peter’s message on the day of Pentecost and Paul’s address at Antioch use Psalm 16 as the cornerstone to speak about Christ’s resurrection and this points back to Psalm 16 as a *messianic Psalm*. Remember what he said:

“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.” (Acts 2: 29-32, ESV).

[SLIDE] Through this passage, Peter tells the crowd 3 things clearly: First, God raised Jesus from the dead. Second, it was not possible for death to hold Jesus. Third, David spoke of the Messiah.

Paul, when speaking at Antioch of Pisidia also quotes Psalm 16 [SLIDE]:

“For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, but he whom God raised up did not see corruption.” (Acts 13:36, ESV).

Just on a side note, this passage, perhaps, aided by two others (Rom\_10:7, and 1Pe\_3:19), that the Apostle’s Creed takes its phrase that Jesus “descended” “into hell”. This word, this phrase underpins something some critical to our faith.

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Peter speaks to the heart of the multitude with a message that transforms them. He speaks about resurrection—and it is this word, and our understanding of it, that is so important to us. Beyond what I've just said, why do we care so much about a few words when we believe we understand the meaning of the Psalm—the understanding that David is thanking God for His faithfulness? I think that after we look closely at this Psalm together, we'll be able to apply it in our daily lives. So let's step back for a moment from this text and concentrate on Psalm 16.

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[SLIDE] The Psalms are called “the most significant and influential collection of religious poems ever written”<sup>1</sup>. In Hebrew, the closet word to psalm is *mizmôr* (מזמור) meaning a poem set to notes<sup>2</sup>. The Psalms are traditionally divided into five books, following the order of the Pentateuch<sup>3</sup>. Book 1 contains personal psalms of David (Psalms 1-41) felt to be collected by David. Most of these Psalms in Book 1 (approximately 37) of the Psalms are attributed to David. As the law specified morning and evening worship along with Sabbath ritual sacrifices and special burnt offerings, the Psalms were used extensively<sup>4</sup>. Remember, the Tabernacle is where harmony with God was restored (through the use of redemptive sacrifices), or strengthened (through thanksgiving sacrifices), and is a centering influence for all Jews. When a Psalm was sung, the singer testified to God’s greatness, the listener heard how God worked in another person’s life, and the entire audience was encouraged by God’s power<sup>5</sup>.

Many of the Psalms have two settings: the historical experience of the author at the time of writing, and the setting when sung to the Israelites during worship. The title of Psalm 16 distinguishes it as a *miktam*. There are six *Miktam* psalms in the Psalter belonging to David, and while four of these six have specific references to events in the life David, there is no certainty with respect to the date of Psalm 16. Regardless of the events surrounding the writing of the Psalm, David expresses his confidence in God and his thankfulness for God’s character. These elements were as applicable to David at the time of writing as they were to the Israelites during worship and as they are to use today.

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<sup>1</sup> Merton, T. (1953). *Bread in the Wilderness*. London: Hollis and Carter.

<sup>2</sup> Strong, J. (1890). *Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*. (R. Meyers, Ed.) (10.4.0). e-Sword.

<sup>3</sup> Schultz, S. J., & Smith, G. V. (2001). *Exploring the Old Testament*. Wheaton: Crossway Books.

<sup>4</sup> La Sor, W. S., Hubbard, D. A., & Bush, F. W. (1989). *Old Testament Survey. The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

<sup>5</sup> Schultz, S. J., & Smith, G. V. (2001). *Exploring the Old Testament*. Wheaton: Crossway Books.

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[SLIDE] Psalm 16 can be broken into two initial parts: Verse 1-6, and 7-11. In verses 1-6 David appears to speak to another, comparing his life of faithfulness to God to an unfaithful person<sup>6</sup>. David is jubilant with joy, and acknowledges God as his sustainer (vs. 1 ‘I take refuge in You’; vs. 5 ‘the portion of my inheritance and my cup’; vs. 6 ‘a beautiful inheritance’, English Standard Version). David associates with Godly worshippers (vs. 3 ‘the saints in the land’, ESV) but refuses company with false worshippers (vs. 4 ‘those who run after another god’, ESV). Verses 7-11 are pure joy as David praises God. So there are 4 key themes here: the psalmic theme, the comparison of human behaviour (holy vs. unfaithful), the blessings on earth, and the blessings in heaven<sup>7</sup>.

Psalm 16 falls into the theme of justice, and David is calling upon God’s promise of justice, specifically on “justice as God will deliver it”<sup>8</sup> (p. 271). Remember God’s promise in Deuteronomy 5:33 is to those who follow Him ‘You shall walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess’ (ESV). In Psalm 16, David affirms God as his portion, that God holds the entirety of David’s ‘lot’ in His hands, and that David finds this satisfactory<sup>9</sup>.

Walter Kaiser, a theologian, notes that “Few psalms simultaneously raise as many important methodological and theological questions as does Psalm 16”<sup>10</sup> (p. 219). Verse 10

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<sup>6</sup> Beuken, W. A. M. (1980). Psalm 16 : the path to life. *Bijdragen*, 41, 368–385.

<sup>7</sup> Olsen, T. (1999). Exegetical Treatment of Psalm 16. Retrieved from <http://www.wlsessays.net/files/OlsenPsalm.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Wright, C. J. (2004). *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*. Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>9</sup> Richards, L. O. (1991). *The Bible Reader’s Companion*. Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing.

<sup>10</sup> Kaiser, Walter C. J. (1980). The promise to David in Psalm 16 and its application in Acts 2:25-33 and 13:32-37. *Journal Of The Evangelical Theological Society*, 23(3), 219–229.

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contains a key word to our understanding “you will not permit your "holy one" to experience corruption."

ESV	NIV84	NKJV	NLT	NASB
<b>For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.</b>	because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.	For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.	For you will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your holy one to rot in the grave.	For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

Here we see the phrase Holy One, or hasîd. Kaiser notes that hasîd (חסיד) occurs only in the poetic texts<sup>11</sup>. Kaiser makes a clear point [SLIDE]:

“...we believe hasîd is best rendered in a passive form, "one to whom God is loyal, gracious or merciful" or "one in whom God manifests his grace and favor," rather than in an active form as "one who is loyal to God.”” (p. 225)

This understanding allows us to tie the messianic form of this word to other messianic Scriptures (Psalm 2:7, Isaiah 41:1, Jesus’ baptism in Mark 1:11, and the transfiguration in Matthew 17:5).

**Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the messianic expectation in the Psalm 16, as Peter states that David’s body has seen decay<sup>12</sup> in the ESV translation.**

<sup>11</sup> Kaiser, Walter C, J. (1980). The promise to David in Psalm 16 and its application in Acts 2:25-33 and 13:32-37. *Journal Of The Evangelical Theological Society*, 23(3), 219–229.

<sup>12</sup> Waltke, B. K., & Yu, C. (2007). *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

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So what about the word resurrection? David speaks of death, a lack of “corruption” and this points towards a resurrection. Peter uses this Psalm to speak of Jesus’ resurrection. And this all ties together quite nicely...for a 21<sup>st</sup> century audience.

[SLIDE] So, what did the Jews understand at the time of David? Remember that the Scriptures or the oral history that would have been available to David at the time of writing the Psalms (given his acknowledgement as the writer of Psalm 16) were the Pentateuch, Job, Joshua, Judges, and Ruth<sup>13</sup>. Job appears refers to an afterlife with God in Job 19:25-27: “I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” A few of the Psalms note that there is a difference between the end of the lives of the wicked and the end of the lives of the righteous—where the righteous would see God. Our understanding of Old Testament theology is that there was a limited belief in a resurrection. We understand this Psalm historically as David's confidence that God would deliver him from death at the hands of his enemies. Old Testament did not have a fully developed hope and belief in the resurrection until the later prophets.

And what about modern orthodox Jews? They believe that during the Messianic Age, the temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem, the Jewish people will be gathered from the far corners of the earth and the bodies of the dead will be brought back to life and reunited with their souls, but even this view is not universal today. But Old Testament Jews did not have an understanding or at the best case a limited understanding of a resurrection. Nor did this concern them much—they were attached to life in the here and now, interested in the outcome of God’s judgment on people in their daily lives, not thinking on an afterlife. Life comes from God (Gen 2:7), returns to God

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<sup>13</sup> Guthrie, G. H. (2011). *Read the Bible For Life*. Nashville: LifeWay Press.

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(Ecc 12:7) and the dead have no role in what happens thereafter (Ecc 9:5-6). So, clear Old Testament references to a resurrection are rare, and can be seen as a metaphor of Israel's return from exile and disgrace. Scholars even feel that the reference in Job is ambiguous. What we have are the seeds of a future Messiah and a potential future understanding of a resurrection within the Old Testament. Those seeds will bear spiritual fruit when God's promise of a Messiah is fulfilled<sup>14</sup>. To be clear, the Pharisees who believed that a resurrection of the dead was a reward for living a righteous life, **but the Sadducees did not.**

And how about the Greeks? This whole concept is immensely mind-blowing for the Greeks in Jerusalem 7 weeks after the resurrection. And that is because Greek theological understanding did not include resurrection! As Dr. Jon Paulien describes it, death was a one-way street for the Greeks. "You can travel down that street leading to death, but once at your destination, you can't come back."<sup>15</sup> That explains why when Paul was speaking to the Greeks at Mars Hill in Acts 17, they jeered him. "...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." Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this.'" (Acts 17: 31-32, ESV).

So, the Jews at the time of the 1<sup>st</sup> century had a limited understanding of the resurrection, and the Greeks had none. And David had none. That means that the only way for David to have written about the resurrection, something he could not have understood—but was needed to complete Peter and Paul's preaching, was for the Holy Spirit to have told David to write this. I imagine it as the Holy Spirit saying to David [SLIDE]: "David, write this. You may not

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<sup>14</sup> Jon Paulien, 'The Resurrection and the Old Testament', *Perspective Digest. A Publication of the Adventist Theological Society*, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Paulien.

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understand this now, but as your line comes to Earth as the Messiah, this passage will be needed to complete the prophecy. You are planting seeds that will be fulfilled as fruit when the Messiah comes!” David spoke with boldness that the holy one would not be abandoned by God, and these statements in verses 9-11 would have brought comfort and joy even without the complete understanding of the resurrection. [SLIDE] There’s a word for this: *sensus plenior*. It means that there is an “additional, deeper meaning, intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author”.<sup>16</sup> It is one of those amazing mysteries of Scripture, a mystery we can only know when we spend more time reading and meditating on God’s word. David died, was buried and his body decayed. Jesus Christ, died, was buried and was raised from the dead on the third day.

[SLIDE] Today, we can understand the use of Psalms in temple worship, the Old Testament understanding of the afterlife, the complete fulfillment of Psalm 16 in Jesus’ resurrection, and the impact of the Holy Spirit upon David when he wrote this text so that it would be fulfilled in the New Testament. Psalm 16, written by David, contains text that is both mystifying and gratifying. So beyond that, why am I telling you about this? And what can we do about it, and how does it impact our daily lives as followers of Christ?

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<sup>16</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture* (Baltimore: Saint Mary’s University Press, 1955).

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[SLIDE] Firstly, I'm sharing this with you today to encourage you to marvel. This passage is just one example of the depth of Scripture. And there are many other examples throughout Scripture if we only take the time to meditate on them. For example, there are 10 plagues brought upon Egypt by God—but each of the plagues deliberately target each of the 10 false gods the Egyptians worshipped. Turning the Nile water to blood defeated the god of Hapi the spirit of the Nile. And the plagues culminate with the deaths of the Egyptian firstborn, defeating Osiris-ruler of the Egyptian underworld and giver of life. The sacrifice of lambs was a direct defeat of Osiris who was depicted with the head of as a ram. The list goes on and on. David could not know about the Messiah's sacrifice, yet spoke with boldness that he would not be abandoned by God. This declaration, used by the Apostles in the New Testament to speak of Jesus' resurrection, speaks to the ability of the Old Testament to instruct New Testament Christians. Our understanding today of the resurrection perhaps helps us understand why 3,000 people came to Christ that day—it would have been the first time they would have had someone explain to them about eternal life in Jesus Christ!

**Secondly, I'm sharing this with you today to encourage you to meditate.** The two quotations of Psalm 16 by Peter and Paul now have a richer meaning to you. Peter makes a strong argument for Jesus by including Jesus' earthly works (Acts 2: 22), His resurrection by quoting Psalm 16, and His exaltation (Acts 2:33-35)<sup>17</sup>. The resurrection fulfills verse 10 of David's Psalm. So how do we meditate and understand the word more deeply? There are many resources available for you to use to understand the Bible better: a study Bible, e-sword, concordances. These may sound intimidating, but ask Pastor Tom, or one of the Elders for help—we want to help you probe the truth of Scripture. We read the Bible with 21<sup>st</sup> century

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<sup>17</sup> Trull, G. V. (2004a). Peter's interpretation of Psalm 16:8-11 in Acts 2:25-32. *Bibliotheca sacra*, 161(644 O-D), 432-448.

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eyes—start to read the Bible learning to understand what these words would have meant to the readers then!

**Lastly, I'm sharing this with you today to encourage you to multiply.** As you share the Gospel with others, share with them some of these mysteries. The non-believing world sees the Bible as fantasy, as stories not to be understood, and these beliefs help them in denying the existence of a God who loves them. By sharing with them how David, through the work of the Holy Spirit, foretold the resurrection of Jesus Christ without the understanding of how this could be; by sharing with them that Peter, an untrained fisherman was able to then share the Gospel so that 3,000 became followers of Jesus Christ that day; and by sharing with them how Paul used the same passage to explain resurrection to an unknowing group of Greek people—sharing those things with them will allow them insight into a Holy text that is not allegory, but a life manual complete with words that mean as much today as when they were written.

[SLIDE] This passage touched me personally. Probably much like you, I read the Bible through 21<sup>st</sup> century eyes, with knowledge passed down through theologians, preachers and teachers through the centuries. When Pastor Tom preached on Psalm 16 several years ago, it made me wonder about what this passage meant to the 1<sup>st</sup> century church, what it might have meant to David. And the more I read, and re-read this Scripture, the more astonished I became. The more we pore into Scripture, the more it pours into us. And it turns out that every word matters—we just need to take the time and the heart to listen to God speaking to us. We can all find this, just by spending more time in the Word. **The more you pore into Scripture, the more it pours into you.**

Verse 11 is a fitting end for both the Psalm and this sermon: ‘You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures

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forevermore' (ESV). Salvation comes from the Lord, and through the work of the Holy Spirit, David was able to testify to the forthcoming resurrection, and we can now see this text not only as foretelling the resurrection and changing the lives of more than 3,000 people—but instructing us today.