

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Introduction

The resurrection of Jesus is important for several reasons. **First**, it witnesses to the immense power of God because it is God who raised Him from the dead; this is what the apostles preached (Acts 2:32; 3:14-15, 26; 4:9-10; 5:30; 10:39-41; 13:29-30). To believe in the resurrection is to believe in God. The resurrection of Jesus reminds us of God's absolute sovereignty over life and death. **Second**, the resurrection of Jesus is a testimony to the resurrection of human beings. Christianity is the only religion whose founder transcends death (Revelation 1:18) and who promises His followers that they also will conquer death (John 5:24; Romans 6:8-9; 1 Corinthians 15:21; Hebrews 2:14-15; Revelation 20:6; 21:4). As Christians, we take comfort in the fact that our God became man, died for our sins, and was resurrected the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3-5). The grave could not hold Him (Acts 2:22-24). He lives, and He sits today at the right hand of God the Father in heaven (Acts 2:32-36). Some in Corinth did not believe in the future resurrection of the dead, and so Paul reveals the consequences of such a denial (1 Corinthians 15:12-19): (i) Preaching Christ is vain, (ii) One's faith in Christ is vain, (iii) All those who claim to be witnesses of the resurrection are liars, (iv) Everyone is still in their sins, (v) Those who have died in Christ have perished, and, (vi) Christians are the most pitiable people on the earth. But Christ has indeed risen from the dead and "has become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

God's word promises that we shall all be resurrected when Jesus Christ returns; such hope and assurance results in a great song of triumph: "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55). How do these verses relate to the importance of the resurrection? Paul answers, "...you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:58). It is this assurance of the resurrection that empowers or strengthens us to endure suffering, persecution, and peril for Christ's sake (1 Corinthians 15:29-31).

The resurrection is the triumphant and glorious victory for every believer. Jesus Christ died, was buried, and rose the third day according to the Scripture. When Jesus returns, the dead in Christ will be raised up, and those who remain and are alive at His coming will be changed and receive new, glorified bodies (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Why is the resurrection of Jesus Christ important to salvation? It demonstrated that God accepted Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf. It proves that God has the power to raise us from the dead. It guarantees that those who believe in Christ will not remain dead, but will be resurrected unto eternal life. That is our blessed hope!

1. Paul says, "And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain" (1 Corinthians 15:14). If the resurrection of Jesus is untrue, then Christianity collapses. But if Jesus was raised from the dead, what then?
2. In this lesson we shall remind ourselves of the historical record of the resurrection, look at the implications of the resurrection, and consider the present reality of the resurrection.

I. THE HISTORICAL RECORD

A. Jesus foretold His resurrection in a variety of ways:

1. Figuratively:

"So the Jews answered and said to Him, What sign do You show to us, since You do these things? Jesus answered and said to them, **Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.** Then the Jews said, It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days? But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said" (John 2:18-22 NKJV).

2. By Old Testament allusion:

"Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, Teacher, we want to see a sign from You. But He answered and said to them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. **For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth**" (Matthew 12:38-40 NKJV).

3. Directly:

“From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You! But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men” (Matthew 16:21-23 NKJV).

B. In spite of His repeated instruction, Jesus’ disciples did not believe it when it happened (cp. John 20:9; Luke 24:6).

1. They had witnessed Jesus raise others from the dead, but they must come to believe fully in the Father by His resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:24).
2. The death of Jesus was the type of shocking tragedy in which emotion supplants rationality and balanced analysis. This may go some way in explaining why they scoffed when certain women told them that Jesus was risen (Luke 24:11), were slow of heart to believe the prophets (Luke 24:25), and why they were troubled and doubtful (Luke 24:38).

C. Jesus, therefore, had to provide gradual and repeated proof of His resurrection.

1. Appearances: several appearances were necessary: to the women who went to anoint Jesus’ body (Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-2); to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9; John 20:11-17); to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32); to the ten and then to the eleven (John 20:19-26), etc.

“The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:1-3 NKJV).

2. Teaching: Jesus appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus and showed them what the prophets had taught concerning Himself (Luke 24:27, 32). Also, Jesus appeared to His disciples over a period of forty days and I have no doubt He made reference to the teachings of the prophets (Acts 1:1-3).
3. Sensory: Jesus didn’t just appear to them, He also allowed them to see, hear, and touch Him. They also witnessed Him eating a meal. This was no spirit they were seeing; they were seeing the real Jesus (Luke 24:36-43).

The disciples gradually came to the conviction that Jesus was raised from the dead and they preached this truth with all diligence.

II. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

A. What a glorious day it was when Jesus destroyed him who had the power of death (Hebrews 2:14), broke the chains of death (2 Timothy 1:10), and rose triumphant from the grave (Romans 6:8-9).

B. But what are the implications and benefits of Christ’s resurrection for us?

1. The resurrection declared the Sonship of Jesus with power (Romans 1:4). While many other convincing proofs were offered (Acts 2:22), the resurrection was the ultimate approval of all that Jesus did and taught.
2. The resurrection is man’s assurance of the removal of sin (Acts 13:30-39). The essence of the “promise which was made to the fathers” (Acts 13:32) was the forgiveness of sin, and the resurrection is evidence that the sacrifice of Jesus was acceptable and effective.
3. The resurrection is the assurance of our own resurrection (2 Corinthians 4:13-14; 1 Corinthians 6:14). We will all live beyond this life, but what will be the *quality* of our existence (cp. Daniel 12:2)?

4. The resurrection means we have a *living* hope (1 Peter 1:3, 20-21). It is the resurrected life of Christ which makes our hope *living*, not some theory or philosophy or page out of a book. Jesus, by example, became the firstfruits of other resurrected lives (1 Corinthians 15:20).
5. The resurrection is mankind's assurance of the coming judgment (Acts 17:31). Jesus was raised and divine scrutiny revealed no fault or flaw. Therefore, "His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption" (Acts 2:31). We, too, will be raised unto judgment.
6. The resurrection imposes moral imperatives on each one of us (1 Corinthians 15:32; Romans 6:4-6). Knowing that we will live forever and be held accountable for all our actions gives us purpose to live morally, self-sacrificially, and obediently.
7. The resurrection is the basis of our courage and endurance (2 Corinthians 4:16-5:3). As we mature spiritually, our conception of renewal and eternal life grows. We groan under the strain of earthly burdens - sickness, death, failure, disappointment, etc. - which only serve to make us eagerly desire "our habitation which is from heaven."

III. THE PRESENT REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION

- A. The resurrection is more than a fact of ancient history; it is a **present reality**. He *is* risen! Jesus lives now!
- B. Further, Jesus was raised to rule! Our belief in the current reign of Jesus over the entire world and for the benefit of His spiritual kingdom gives us great calmness (Philippians 4:6-7), resignation (2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Romans 5:14; Philippians 4:11), and optimism (Romans 8:27-39).
- C. Jesus not only lives in heaven but lives through us, His brethren and disciples (Galatians 2:20). We must declare the resurrected life of Jesus in our own lives.

Conclusion

1. Jesus foretold of His death, burial, and resurrection in a variety of ways: figuratively (John 2:18-20), by Old Testament allusion (Matthew 12:38-40), and directly (Matthew 16:21-23). Yet the disciples were slow to understand and slow to believe when He was resurrected (Luke 24:11). So Jesus had to provide gradual and repeated proofs that He really had been resurrected through repeated appearances (Matthew 28:1-10; John 20:11-17; Luke 24:13-32; John 20:19-26; cp. Acts 1:1-3), teaching (Luke 24:27, 32), and in allowing His disciples to handle Him and see Him eating (Luke 24:36-43).
2. Jesus' resurrection was a triumphant day in which He broke the power of the Devil (Hebrews 2:14) and the chains of death (2 Timothy 1:10). The resurrection, though, had far reaching implications: it declared His Sonship (Romans 1:4), gave man the assurance of the forgiveness of sins (Acts 13:30-39), points to the certainty of our own resurrection (2 Corinthians 4:13-14; 1 Corinthians 4:13-14), gives us a living hope (1 Peter 1:3, 20-21; 1 Corinthians 15:20), assures us of the coming judgement (Acts 17:31), imposes upon us moral imperatives (1 Corinthians 15:32; Romans 6:4-6), and it is the basis for our courage and endurance (2 Corinthians 4:16-5:3).
3. The resurrection of Jesus is more than just a fact of history; it is a present reality! Jesus lives and rules over His kingdom, and this fills us with calm (Philippians 4:6-7), resignation (2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Romans 5:14; Philippians 4:11), and optimism (Romans 8:27-39). Jesus also lives in His disciples (Galatians 2:20). We must declare the resurrected life of Jesus in our own lives.

"Indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection...if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:8-11).