

QUESTIONS WE WANT ANSWERED

19 What Are the Results of Christ's Resurrection?

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith is vain. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most to be pitied.

An early skeptic once said, "You Christians live on the fragrance of an empty tomb." It is sarcasm, but it is absolutely true. We Christians do live on the fragrance of an empty tomb. We do keep insisting that Jesus did arise bodily from the dead and it is to be expected that people are going to respond to that belief in one way or another. I often think it must become increasingly difficult for some people at the Easter time of the year when enthusiasm over Jesus' resurrection reaches its peak. About the only thing to do is muffle one's skepticism and give the impression of believing this incredible story about Jesus. Yet, for millions of people it is not a matter of make-believe or wishful thinking. Scholars have long felt that if it were not for what happened on the first Easter morning there would have been no Christian message, no Christian faith, no Christian Church. Some have even gone so far as to say that if it were not for His resurrection, the name of Jesus Christ would not have a place in recorded history. However, before the close of the first century that name was firmly established in the known world and no amount of repression could stifle the spread of the good news about Jesus. Almost a score of centuries later it remains clearly the most dynamic spiritual movement known to man. The resurrection shows the true identity of Christ and upon it Christians take their stand.

It is amazing how something which has happened in the past affects our lives in the present. The bicentennial celebration of the people who live in this great

land is an example of the enjoyment of a rich heritage which was born two hundred years ago. Today we feel the impact of acts and events which took place long before we were here. Because today is Easter we look back on an event which we have come to recognize as a fact of history. We did not see it happen nor have we spoken with anyone who has. Nonetheless, we have come to an appreciation of it and the results of Jesus' resurrection are felt by us today. Our study of I Corinthians 15 will deal with what we can understand and appreciate as the results of this triumph over death. For our purposes today we shall speak of the resurrection proof and the resurrection promise.

I. IT RESULTED IN A PROOF - THE IDENTITY OF JESUS:

We can be certain that Jesus died. No theory of swooning or drug simulation is acceptable. The brutal scourging, the blow of the spear, the size of the wound, the draining of His blood, the testimony of the centurion to Pilate, the lack of need to break His bones, all these speak of death. That He did not die is morally impossible, for after His resurrection Christ said, *"It behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead."* The moral character of Christ forbids any pretense on His part that He had died when He knew all the time He hadn't. His resurrection from the dead results first in the proof that Christianity is objectively true and that the claims made about Jesus are true.

1. A Seal of His Claims:

This was true not only of Jesus' personal claims, but the claims of others who had written about him centuries before. In I Corinthians 15:4 Paul uses the expression *"according to the Scriptures."* The Scriptures He is referring to are not the Book of Luke or Acts, which had not yet been written when he wrote to the Corinthians. Paul is making reference to Job 19:25; Psalm 16:10; the Book of Jonah and to the promise God made to Abraham about his son Isaac. The resurrection hope was buried in the Old Testament and the truth remained only to be discovered. The claims of Jesus are important and ought to win respect. Jesus did what He said He was going to do. A reference here could be Matthew 26:32, *"But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."* Those claims recorded in the Gospel accounts are Matthew 12:38-40, 16:21, 17:22-23, 20:18-19, 26:32, 27:63; Mark 8:31-91, 9:31, 14:28, 10:32; Luke 9:22-27; John 2:19-22, 12:34.

2. A Sign of His Innocence:

Paul writes here in I Corinthians 15:21, *"For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead."* Verse 22, *"For as in Adam all die..."* If Christ had been guilty of one single sin He would have been subject to the destructive effects of that sin and His body would have corrupted in the grave as with the bodies of all men. That is what Peter meant when he spoke to the men of Israel, *"And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power."* (Acts 2:24-27) The resurrection of Christ is a proof to the watching world of His innocence.

3. A Stamp of Approval:

Notice in I Corinthians 15:15 the words, *"because we witnessed against (concerning) God that He raised Christ."* Here we come to the heart of the Gospel message, which is the redemption of the human individual. Here again Paul writes, *"...and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins."* (15:17) Why are we still in our sins? The answer is that Christ's work was not an accredited work by God. It may have been meritorious in His (Christ's) eyes and even in ours, but if His teaching and cross-work was not acceptable in God the Father's opinion, the whole effort falls to the ground. The writer to the Hebrews reminds us, *"Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in you that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and forever."* (Hebrews 13:21) The crowning of all Jesus did and said was His resurrection from the dead by the Father, it was the highest approval which could be given.

4. A Signal to the World:

Paul writes, *"But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He abolished all rule and all authority and power."* (I Corinthians 15:23-24) In Romans 1:4 Paul puts it another way, *"who was declared with power to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead."* God stations His Son on the horizon of human history for all generations to take note of who He is. He does this by the unique resurrection of Jesus from the grave. Never has such a thing happened

before. Others have risen only to die again. Here we have a God certified religion and that is why the resurrection of Christ is the pivotal assertion of Christianity's claim on the lives of all men. This is not to say that other religions do not possess truth. Other faiths do have knowledge about God. God has been pleased to make Himself known in many ways. It is at the point of personal immortality that Christianity takes issue and is intolerant. There is only one in all history who has done with death what Jesus has done. He conquered it! The signal flag is up and waving before the whole world today in the form of an empty tomb. It is always important to obey the signals and give heed to what they tell you. This is one signal no one can afford to overlook.

II. IT RESULTED IN A PROMISE - THE DESTINY OF THE INDIVIDUAL PERSON:

Notice, if you will, the words of Paul again in I Corinthians 15:22, *"For as in Adam all die..."* There is something of Adam's experience in all of us. We have not obeyed God perfectly just as he did not. Hence, we die. Now, the first of several promises that I want you to think about is the promise of eternal life. One day the Lord Jesus was busy ministering to the needs of people and He said to a woman, *"I am the resurrection and the life...whosoever believes in me shall never die."* Certainly when Jesus said, *"shall never die,"* He did not mean physical death because the world is full of dead and buried Christians. He was speaking of another kind of death which we speak of as spiritual death. This is separation from God, who is the source of all life. In order that believers do not confuse the two the writers of the New Testament seldom used the word "death" to describe the brother or sister in the Lord who has passed on. Rather, they used such terms as *"sleep"* or *"at home in the Lord"* or *"departed"* or *"loose the moorings"* as a vessel put out to sea. What a comfort this is. Because Christ is alive, we have the promise that ours is a personal immortality and we shall never die in the spiritual use of the word.

Secondly, the resurrection of Christ bodily from the dead resulted in the promise that believers also shall rise bodily in a spiritually constituted body which God will fashion. In the 15th chapter of I Corinthians, Paul argues for the **certainty** of the resurrection (15:1-11), he moves on to describe the **consequences** of the resurrection (15:12-28), and from there he directs his readers attention to the **characteristics** of the resurrection as they become the bodies of believers. (15:38-50).

At this point I must digress in order to build a foundation supporting what the Scriptures teach about the resurrection of our bodies. The world in which the Easter message was first proclaimed was politically controlled by Rome and intellectually influenced by Greek thought. The Greeks had a long tradition in holding to an afterlife. They believed in the immortality of the soul. Orphic sects six centuries before Christ handed down an elaborate doctrinal system concerning the soul which they felt was divinely created and immortal. The body was considered evil and the tomb of the soul.

These Orphic concepts received their fullest explanation in Plato's dialogues. Plato, who lived 450 years before Christ, taught that physical matter was evil. He felt "something was the matter with matter." Plato felt that the universe was imperfect because it was made of defective ingredients. Therefore, Plato felt the body must be debased in order to free the soul for higher pursuits. This attitude prevailed in the world at the time Christ arose. The resurrection was foreign to the approach the Greeks had to the body. They felt it belonged in the grave. It could be no possible help to anyone, only a hindrance. It was a liberation to be rid of it. Now, with that as our background, we can understand why every time the apostles opened their mouths about the resurrection, they found themselves in trouble. They couldn't have said anything more offensive to those Platonic ears before them. A good example of this is found in Acts 17:32 where Paul was speaking to the Athenians.

It is amazing that for the first thousand years of the Christian era the theologians were Platonic in terms of their world views. Part of the problem also arose because of what Paul had written about the body and the flesh. The word "*flesh*" is used in different ways in Scripture. It has to do with the "*flesh*" of our bodies as in Luke 24:39 and other times it refers to the whole person, the living being as in Acts 2:17. In addition, it describes humanity as in I John 4:2 where Christ is spoken of as becoming a man. Importantly, it also means our sinful natures as in Romans 8:4-8. There are two words used. One is "*soma*" meaning body, and the other is "*sarx*" meaning flesh. One can see how it is not very difficult to mistake one for the other. Never is the body meant to be spoken of as evil. In fact there are no evil "*things*." Evil does not lurk or harbor in things. The body can be used in an evil way. It was at this point that a cleavage came into being as far as the natural and the spiritual were concerned. The Christian faith ascribes a real dignity to the human body and when the Easter message was proclaimed it was most compatible with what God had said about the body all along. It

becomes a temple of God, that's how important it is. Christianity frowns on ideas which debase the body for that reason.

Think about your body for a moment. You may not feel it is the most attractive body in the world, we all feel something of that. However, it is important now as the house in which the real you lives. One day it will wear out and go to the grave. Paul instructs (15:36-37) that we should not be alarmed about this because death is a prelude to life. The natural body is a wonderful mechanism, but it is marked by corruption and weakness. The new body will be characterized by incorruption and power. In verses 45-50 we are instructed that just as our present bodies carry the stamp of Adam, so our new bodies will bear the stamp of the second Adam who is Christ. He is called a second Adam in Scripture because He brings about a new beginning for the human race. In the resurrection believers will be exactly like Jesus in terms of their spiritual body and moral purity. We can only weave various passages of Scripture together to imagine what these bodies will be like. Like the angels it will not be given in marriage (Matthew 22:23-32; Luke 20:35-36) It will reflect God's glory. (Revelation 1:16; Daniel 12:3) It will not be subject to time and space restrictions, as in the case with Jesus. (Luke 24:31; John 20:19; Acts 1) Evidently, it will be able to move from place to place instantly. It will be above the angels. (1 Corinthians 6:3) It will not require food, but will be able to eat and assimilate food as Jesus did. (Luke 24:41-43) It will be a substantial body capable of being touched. (Luke 24:39) These things will be true of those who trust in Jesus Christ. These are the results of His resurrection.

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