

The Sign of the Resurrection Do You Really Believe in the Resurrection

Intro: In our building faith series last year, we not only responded to some of the arguments that have been made by unbelievers against faith and against Christianity in particular; we have also taken an in-depth look at the positive proofs that support our faith in Jesus Christ. And there is no greater proof than the sign of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Over the past several months we have methodically investigated the evidence the NT gives us for the resurrection by asking three essential questions:

Did Jesus really die?

How and where was He buried?

Is there adequate testimony from proper sources to confirm His resurrection from the dead?

To Christians the facts as presented in the gospels lead us to the inescapable conclusion that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead. However, all through the centuries, unbelievers have denied the resurrection and offered various theories to explain by natural means why the disciples believed that Jesus was alive after his death. So we have met the challenge of unbelievers by adding one more question in our study:

Is there a reasonable naturalistic theory that adequately explains how the apostle's believed and proclaimed that Jesus was raised from the dead?

In our last two lessons we've looked at theories that are often offered to "explain" the empty tomb such as the resuscitation theory or the stolen body theory; and we've seen that they utterly fail to account for all the facts of the gospel or offer any reasonable alternative to the doctrine of the resurrection.

But now that we have thoroughly examined the evidence for and against the resurrection, it is important to recognize what the truth of the resurrection calls upon us to do. The resurrection is not merely a nice fact to intellectually accept as true, but a dynamic life-changing truth that affects every area of our lives as Christians. So in this final lesson of our series let's consider how the message of the resurrection should impact our lives.

If we truly believe in the resurrection Jesus we will:

Obey the gospel of Jesus Christ!

The resurrection of Jesus is a central truth of the gospel message.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, (1 Cor. 15:3-4)

Consequently, it is vitally connected with every condition of forgiveness.

It is part of the truth we must believe.

Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification. (Rom. 4:23-25)

It is the motivation for the repentance God commands.

“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” (Ac. 17:30-31)

It is the foundation for our confession of Jesus as Lord.

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Rom. 10:9-10)

It not only provides the imagery for baptism, it gives baptism its saving power.

And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him. (1 Pet. 3:21-22)

If we truly believe in the resurrection then we will respond to the gospel in obedience to God’s terms of pardon.

Live a new life!

Just as we show our faith in the resurrection through obedience to the gospel, we also show it through living a changed life.

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:3-4)

Paul seeks to show that the decision to obey the gospel is a decision to live a different way of life. He makes two key points:

Just as Jesus physically died to sin once for all, so we should spiritually die to sin once for all.

Just as Jesus lives to God (through His physical resurrection), so we should live to God through our spiritual resurrection.

Notice how Paul prefaces the changed lifestyle of the disciple of the Lord in Col. 3:1.

If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind

on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:1-2)

We show that we believe in the resurrection when we live a new life.

Rely upon the power of God to transform us into Jesus' likeness.

Consider Paul's prayer for the Ephesians:

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, (Ephesians 1:18-20)

Paul's point is that the resurrection power of Jesus works in us too to raise us from spiritual death and make us alive in Him.

It is this power that raised Jesus that "strengthens us with power in the inner man" (Eph. 3:16)

It is the power of God working in Jesus' resurrection that causes us to know that "he is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

We show we believe in the resurrection when we look to that power as the source of our spiritual strength.

Depend upon the intercession of Jesus for forgiveness and help in times of weakness.

The Hebrew writer reminds us that what makes Jesus a great high priest is the fact that, unlike OT priests, His life is indestructible.

And the former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers, because they were prevented by death from continuing, but He, on the other hand, because He abides forever, holds His priesthood permanently. (Heb. 7:23-24)

Because Jesus was raised from the dead, "He ever lives to make intercession for us."

When we pray, relying upon His intercession, we are really showing our faith in Jesus' resurrection.

Worship with other Christians each first day!

There may be more than one reason why the first day was the day enjoined by God for Christians to meet together.

It may have been selected because of the analogy of creation.

Just as the seventh day Sabbath suggested the completed redemption of God of the Israelites in dwelling in the land in rest, the first day suggests the ongoing work of God in beginning a new creation and working in it until the day of rest comes! The Sabbath acknowledges redemption completed! The "Lord's Day" acknowledges redemption begun!

Thus, I believe it was no accident that Jesus was raised on the first day of the week and not on another day.

I believe it cannot be successfully contradicted that the first day was chosen for God's people to meet because of the resurrection of Jesus.

Sabbatarians argue that Christians worshipped on the Sabbath; but Constantine changed the day of worship to Sunday. Nothing could be further from the truth.

We can see churches in the first century meeting on the first day of every week (1 Cor. 16:1-2; Ac. 20:7)

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. (1 Cor. 11:26)

When we meet with the saints on the first day and break bread we acknowledge the resurrection of Jesus..

Die in hope of eternal life

Our faith in the resurrection assures us in the moment of death. We believe that we shall be raised to eternal life because Jesus was raised from the dead.

"But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. 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 has abolished all rule and all authority and power." (1 Cor. 15:20-24)

And that faith gives hope for all those that we love. It enables us to "sorrow not as the rest who have no hope."

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus." (1 Thes. 4:14)

If you really believe in the resurrection, then you can face not only the death of those you love, but your own death with hope.

Conclusion: The resurrection of Jesus is not just a nice fact to accept. It is one of the most essential, life-transforming truths of the gospel. To truly acknowledge the resurrection of Jesus is to live a totally different life from the world about us. In all these ways we show the world about us what the "resurrection" life means!

Over these past several months we've given the evidence God has given us for the resurrection. Do you believe it? Will you show that you believe it!