

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

Christianity is unique in its belief in the resurrection of the dead and specifically in the historical reality of the bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth who is the Christ. As we have pointed out many times, the theme of every sermon recorded in the Book of Acts is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If you deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ you have no basis to claim to be a Christian.

Some of the cults, e.g.:

Christian Science: "Resurrection is spiritualization of thought."

Jehovah's Witness: "Christ was not raised in flesh, but with a spiritual body."

Mormonism: Allows for the resurrection, but Jesus is the literal son of Mary and Elohim.

The resurrection of Jesus "turned the world upside down."

Acts 17:1-6

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ² And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." ⁴ And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. ⁵ But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. ⁶ And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also,....

1. The Reality of the Resurrection of Christ

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

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,

Many things are sometimes called “the gospel,” as in “that’s the gospel truth,” when what is being referred to is not the gospel at all.

Paul defines the Gospel in such a way that it is consistent with the OT Scriptures.

Back in 3:11 Paul writes that faith in Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church.

For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

The Gospel is summed up in five facts:

- 1) Jesus of Nazareth is Christ / Messiah;
- 2) Christ died;
- 3) Christ was buried;
- 4) Christ rose from the dead;
- 5) Christ appeared to many witnesses.

The Greek word is *euangelion* which means good tidings or joyful news. There is nothing more joyful for a sinner convicted by the Holy Spirit to hear than that Jesus Christ saves sinners. I am a guilty and condemned sinner; I need a sufficient Savior!

Some so-called theologians have said that it does not matter how Jesus died, that He could have stumped His toe and died of an infection. That is simply foolish because if Jesus did not die according to the OT Scriptures He would be a fake.

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. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

Paul refers to five appearances that Jesus made from the time of His resurrection until His ascension; and the special appearance that He made to Paul. The term:

as of one born out of due time. KJV
as to one untimely born, ESV

refers to the time between Jesus' other post-resurrection appearances and the one to Paul himself. The term means an "abortion" or a "miscarriage." Paul is likely referring to his efforts to persecute the church that was interrupted by Jesus Christ. Paul's persecution of the church was "aborted."

Can you believe in the resurrection of Jesus?

There is as much proof that Jesus rose from the dead as nearly any other historical fact. How do you know that there was a person in history by the name of George Washington and about his role in the establishment of America? You never met him. Well, we have the historical records and we trust those records to be true. So too, do we have the record of the birth, life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Paul has genuine humility. It is all by the grace of God. And Paul says it does not matter who brings the message – it is the message and not the messenger that transforms lives for Jesus Christ.

2. The Result of Denying a Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Apparently some of the Corinthian believers were denying the possibility of a bodily resurrection of the dead. The Greek culture taught the immortality of the soul, but that the body was inherently evil.

The Sadducees did not believe in an afterlife, angels, or the resurrection, and thus when you died that was the end of your existence. See Matthew 22 & Mark 12.

The Sadducees: "They were sad, you see."

Matt 22:23-33

²³ The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, ²⁴ saying, "Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up children for his brother.' ²⁵ Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother. ²⁶ So too the second and third, down to the seventh. ²⁷ After them all, the woman died. ²⁸ In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her."

²⁹ But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. ³⁰ For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. ³¹ And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God:

³² 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.'" ³³ And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.

Paul refutes the idea that death is the end of our existence in the strongest terms; if there is no resurrection then:

- 1) Not even Christ has not been raised [13, 16].
- 2) Our preaching is useless [14a].
- 3) Your faith is useless [14b].
- 4) We have been lying about what God has done [15].
- 5) Your faith is futile [17a].
- 6) Your sins have not been forgiven [17b].

An unrisen Christ is just another martyr with no atoning value.

- 7) Those who died trusting in Christ are lost [18].
- 8) We who have "hope in Christ" are to be pitied for our hope of salvation is baseless [19].

3. The Great News

1 Corinthians 15:20

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Instead of the bleak prospect of life and death without purpose and without the resurrection hope; the apostle declares: “Christ has indeed risen from the dead!” None of those dire consequences listed above exist. Faith in Christ is not an exercise in futility! Our sins are forgiven!

The “firstfruits” refers to a special offering presented to the Lord at the Feast of the Tabernacles [the Fall Harvest Festival] and at Pentecost [the Spring Harvest Festival]. The first sheaf of ripened grain was offered to the Lord in thanksgiving. It was called the firstfruits in view of the crop yet to be harvested.

4. The Outcome of Christ’s Resurrection Body

1 Corinthians 15:21-28

²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴ Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. ²⁸ When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

“In Adam” refers to the natural state of the human race. Everyone born of woman [with the exception of the virgin-born Christ] is born in sin and they will die. So also, to be “in Christ” is to be born again and to have spiritual life restored that was lost in Adam.

Resurrection of the dead is certain and ushers in the “age to come.”

John 5:25-29

²⁵ "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

5. The Resurrection Motive

1 Corinthians 15:29-34

²⁹ Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? ³⁰ Why am I in danger every hour? ³¹ I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! ³² What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." ³³ Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." ³⁴ Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

What about the Mormon practice of “baptizing for the dead.”

“There is historical evidence that the ordinance of baptism was administered in behalf of the dead. Paul confirms the doctrine of salvation for the dead in this same epistle to the Corinthian saints in these words: ‘If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.’ Moreover, the Savior declared that some sins would be forgiven after death to those who do not blaspheme against the Holy Ghost.” ...

“Then, the Mormons proceed with the program of baptism for the dead, under the assumption that the “worthy dead” would have accepted the gospel with all its ordinances, and therefore the ordinances will have to be performed in behalf of the dead, although vicariously. They believe that the Lord declared to Joseph Smith that such vicarious blessings were “ordained and prepared before the foundation of the world, for the salvation of the dead who should die without knowledge of the gospel.” *The Restoration of All Things*, Joseph Fielding Smith, pp 229-235

There is no Scriptural basis for the Mormon practice of “baptizing for the dead.”

What Paul means here is that those who baptize for the dead, even if wrongly motivated, would be acting in vain if there is no resurrection.

The “wild beasts at Ephesus” refers to the riot there [Acts 19:21ff]

Paul is saying that it would be absurd to face such dangers if there is no hope of the resurrection.

6. A New Kind of Body

1 Corinthians 15:35-44

³⁵ But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" ³⁶ You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. ³⁹ For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. ⁴⁰ There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. ⁴¹ There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

⁴² So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

When the body dies it will decay if it is not otherwise destroyed by fire or eaten by fishes, etc. After the body goes back to dust from which it came, in the resurrection, what kind of body comes forth?

When a farmer plants seed what is planted is different from what comes up. Animals, and birds and fish all have different kinds of flesh. Even the heavenly bodies differ in their splendor. So what is so unusual about expecting a different kind of body in the resurrection?

7. Two Adams

1 Corinthians 15:45-49

⁴⁵ Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

God only deals with two men in history. There is the First Adam and there is the Last Adam. This is the doctrine of **representation** [Cf. Romans 5:12-21].

All men are born "in Adam" which means we come into the world condemned with the guilt of Adam imputed to us. We sin because we are sinners.

Only when the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and guilt and we are "born again," or "quickened," changed from death to life, are we put "in Christ" the Last Adam.

The righteousness of Christ is imputed to the one who has faith in Jesus.

We will have to continue this lesson next week. D.V.