

The Resurrection Of Christ - A Foundational Doctrine

Explore Your Faith Teaching Series - Explo-2 ©

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OUTLINE

Introduction:

The resurrection of Christ is the capstone in the arch of salvation.

It is central to the entire biblical revelation and there are innumerable references to it in the New Testament.

Whoever rejects this doctrine cannot have eternal life.

To deny it is to empty faith of all its content and value. Yet, in spite of the widespread ignorance of its importance, it receives little, if any, attention in the pulpits of today.

This vitally important study presents and contrasts other concepts of resurrection with the Christian concept.

It examines what the bible teaches about death and shows how and why our own salvation hinges upon the truth of the resurrection of Christ. It also presents the major criticisms of Christ's resurrection and their refutation.

In this session, we will be examining *the importance* of the **Resurrection of Christ**. Why believe in it? Are there other concepts of resurrection? How is the Christian concept different? Are there demonstrable proofs of it? (i.e., how can I believe in it?).

We are going to look at the biblical view of death, look at what Christ's death has accomplished for us and see how the Christ's resurrection is an important corollary to his death as our substitute.

Some Concepts of 'Resurrection'

Pagan concept - mostly connected with changes of season/ annual miracle of spring etc.

Greek concept (philosophical) - body a hindrance to true life; looked for a time when the soul would be freed from it. (Plato, Socrates)

Jewish concept - two schools of thought. Some firmly believed in the values of the body and that these would not be lost. Others believed there would be no resurrection.

Christian concept - body would be raised, but also transformed so as to be a suitable vehicle for the very different life of the age to come.

Nothing is more characteristic of even the best thought of the day than its hopelessness in the face of death. The gospels tell of an individual who truly died, but overcame death by rising again. And if it is true that Christ's resurrection bears no resemblance to anything in paganism, it is also true that the attitude of believers to their own resurrection, the corollary of their Lord's, is radically different from anything in the pagan world. *The resurrection is clearly of the very first importance for the Christian faith.* We are going to see *why* in this session!

Our salvation hinges upon the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He who truly believes these truths has believed the gospel, and through believing the gospel, will find eternal salvation.

What the bible says about death.

The last enemy to be destroyed is death (1Cor. 15:26)

(1) *Death is an enemy.*

- It is an invader; it was not in the original design of the fallen creation. (See Genesis)

- "sin when it is finished, brings forth death" (**James 1:15**)

- "sin entered the world and death through sin" (**Rom. 5:12**)

(2) *Death will be destroyed*

- Christ has already won victory over death and has delivered us from lifelong bondage to the fear of death (**Heb. 2:14, 15**)
- Its ultimate destruction is yet to come (see **Rev.20: 14**)
- He has delivered us from spiritual death, raising us to new life (**Eph. 2:1-10**)
- He raised physically dead people to life
 - Jairus' daughter (**Luke 8:49-52**)
 - Widow of Nain's son (**Luke 7:14**)
 - Raising of Lazarus (**John 11:38-43**)
- He suffered the penalty of death on behalf of all who should believe in him. Christ by his death abolished death as a form of punishment so that it no longer as enforced as an eternal state. [*think*: why do believers still die? Because their bodies must be changed before they can enter heaven. "Flesh and blood" in their present form "cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven" (1 Cor. 15:50 ff) This change will take place in an instant when Christ returns].
- Christ's death was the seal to all his claims
 - His power over death "Destroy this temple and I will raise it up in 3 days" (**Jn 2:19**)
 - His sinlessness (death had no hold over him)
 - His deity- he was proved to be the Son of God, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (**Rom.1:4**)

(3) *Death is the last enemy to be destroyed*

- Those who are alive at his coming will not see death (**1 Thess. 4:17**)
- There will be no more death at all (**Rev. 21:4**).
 - Christ being raised from the dead guarantees that the redeemed shall be raised also to die no more (**Rom. 6:9**). "because I live, you also will live" (**John 14:19**)

The Necessity of Jesus' Resurrection:

1. To confirm the truth of God's word:

- a) Generally, as to his sovereignty and his faithfulness in all his promises, even future.
- b) particularly about our future state:

Through Old Testament prophecies (see **Ps.16: 8 -11: 21:4; Psalm 89; Isaiah 53:10-12** to name a few)

Through Christ's own prophecies (see **Jn.2: 18-22; 10:15-18; Matt 16:21; 17:22-23; 27:62-64; Mk. 8:31; 9:31; 10:34 et al** about his death and resurrection). The veracity of our Lord is involved.

2. To conquer both sin & the power of sin (death)

- Death could only be conquered by resurrection (**1Cor.15: 16-20**).
- Death alone could not save men; resurrection was absolutely necessary to complete the redemptive plan. (**Rom. 5: 8-10**) note: the meaning through his spirit who is life, therefore, *through his life*)

3. To guarantee the resurrection for believers

Christ the first fruits (**1 Cor 15:20**; proof of his mastery over death); (explain 'first fruits')
See **Rom.8: 11; Jn. 5:28-29; 1Thess 4:15-18; 2Cor. 4:14** et al.

4. To establish the nature of the resurrected body (see **1 Cor 15: 35 -58; Jn. 20: 19-29** et al).

Let's go back to God's original intention in creation (see genesis). Man was created different to the angels.

Christ's resurrection proved the acceptance of his death as a perfect sacrifice. It proved that he had fully endured the penalty that was due for human guilt (the broken Law), as our substitute. Jesus stood in the sinner's place and died, and when he had done that, he left nothing more that could be demanded. For "he who is dead is free from the law"(**Rom. 6:7**).

The debt has been paid. Therefore now we can say; "who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, that is risen again" (**Rom. 8: 33.34**).

Christ's resurrection testifies that the Gospel

- Is of a living Saviour. The Scripture tell us that "he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he even lives to make intercession for them (**Heb. 7:25**).

- Is of a powerful Saviour. He who has the power to raise himself from the dead has all power now that he has been raised.

- Is one of complete justification. All for whom he died, all his people whose sins he bore, are free from the guilt of sin. Who are they? "as many as believe in Him" (**John 1:12, 13**).

- Is one of eternal life (as distinct from eternal death for those who reject it). "Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over him" (**Rom. 6:9**). It is the same with every believer. The believer will not be plucked out of Jesus' hand (**Jn. 10:28, 29**). "the water I shall give shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (**Jn. 4:14**)

The resurrection is central to the entire biblical revelation and there are innumerable references to it throughout the NT (about 104 approx). *To deny it is to empty faith of all content and value (1 Cor. 15:14)*. Because of this the resurrection has undergone a barrage of sustained criticism. It is appropriate that we have an understanding of these criticisms.

Major Criticisms of Christ's Resurrection by non-believers.

1. Alleged discrepancies in the narratives of the resurrection appearances of Jesus;
2. The claim that the 'empty tomb' narrative was added later to the original tradition about the appearance of Jesus and
3. Even if the resurrection were true, it does not prove Jesus' deity.

The historical evidence refutes the first two criticisms. Three (3) strands of evidence refuse to go away, making any skeptical interpretation of them much harder to explain than the simple NT explanation that Jesus was raised from the dead.

1) The tomb was empty!

- Consider: a) Enemies took away the body? Doesn't make sense if they wanted to disprove!
b) Friends took away the body? Not a shred of evidence ever produced
c) He really did rise? Yes, there are demonstrable proofs.

2) Jesus was seen alive!

- Confirmed by resurrection appearances; ten different appearances recorded in our five accounts (4 gospels & 1 Cor.15) **confirm the main facts** of the resurrection.
- Great variety of witnesses (sometimes one or two; other time large number; once about 500)
- Men and women, believers and unbelievers witnessed him alive.
- James and Paul require particular mention.
- Many of these witnesses were around for a long time after the resurrection (at least at the time of writing of the gospels and other epistles)

3) The disciples were transformed!

- Consider them before the crucifixion –beaten and dispirited men
- After the resurrection – ready to go to prison and even die for the sake of Jesus. So convinced that they were ready to break even with their religious customs (e.g., Sabbath replaced by Lord's Day etc.). What changed them? The truth of Christ's resurrection!

It was this third fact, the transformation of the disciples, (based upon the other two) that accounts for the church's birth in that vitality and conviction of the resurrection. *Without the resurrection there would simply have been no Christian community to uphold and proclaim the gospel over the last twenty centuries.*

The third criticism is generally based on the fact that *other people were also raised from the dead without their being acclaimed as divine.*

This criticism fails to note

- (1) that these resurrections were performed on the authority of Jesus and
- (2) In the case of Jesus' resurrection we are not concerned with a mere restoration of physical life. He was not a temporarily resuscitated corpse; his resurrection should not be considered in isolation, **but in the context of the overwhelming vindication of his divine claims**

He claimed to be the life-giver (**Jn. 5:21; 11:25**) and proved it by rising from his death. (**1 Cor.15: 45**). In fact Paul says he 'was declared with power to be the Son of God **by his resurrection from the dead**: Jesus Christ our Lord' (**Rom. 1:4**).

Conclusion:

The resurrection of Christ is the capstone in the arch of Christianity. "He is risen" was the foundation of all the Apostles' teaching and the catch cry of the early church. Without the resurrection of Christ, Paul tells us, we are still 'dead in our sins' and therefore people who hope in vain. This is the sad plight of all those who refuse to believe in the resurrection.