

THE RESURRECTION
The Cornerstone of the Christian Faith
Luke 24:1-12

The commanding climax of God's *purposed plan* for the *redemption of man* is the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ...the *payment for the wages of sin...victory over death...His gift of eternal life*. The **resurrection** is the *cornerstone of the Christian faith*. Everything that we *are...everything we have...everything we hope...is predicated* on its *reality*. There would be no Christianity if there was no resurrection.

Billy Graham once said, *"If I were an enemy of Christianity, I would aim right at the resurrection because it's the heart of Christianity."*

The British philosopher **C.E.M. Joad** was once asked, *"If you could ask one question, and be sure of getting the right answer, what would it be?"* Without a moment's hesitation he responded, *"Did Jesus Christ rise from the dead?"* That indeed is *the question of all questions!*

The message of Scripture has always been a message of *resurrection hope...a message that death isn't the end* for those whose belong to God. For the believer, *death* has never been an *end...but rather the transition* that leads to *eternity* with God...from the *mortal* to *immortality*.

The promised *hope* of God's people throughout history is predicated on the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ. The testimony of **James...Jude ...Paul...all the apostles...they all proclaimed** the **resurrection**. That's why **Paul** wrote...

"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 also

is vain. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified 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 hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied...The last enemy that will be abolished is death."

~I Corinthians 15:12-19, 26

The *resurrection* of Jesus Christ is the *single greatest event* in the *history* of the world. It's so *foundational* to Christianity that anyone who *denies* it can't be a *true* Christian. Without the *resurrection* there is no Christian *faith...no salvation...no forgiveness of sin...no heaven...and no hope*.

Jesus Himself even stated...

"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies."

~John 11:25

I. THE RESURRECTION SHOWED JESUS' DIETY:

Jesus *claimed* to be the *Son of God*. But why would anyone take Him *seriously*? Because if Jesus *actually rose* from the *dead...then His claim* to be the Son of God would *carry considerable weight* and *credibility*. On the other hand...if the **resurrection never actually happened**, then Jesus could be *dismissed* as just another *interesting person in history*.

Did Jesus *rise* from the *dead*? Many *deny it...and there have been many alternative explanations offered*.

That the resurrection was a myth or legend: **A. N. Sherwin-White** of *Oxford* said it took *more than two generations of time* in the ancient world for a *legend* to

develop...and therefore, wipe out a *solid core* of *historical truth*. Yet we have *several early reports* of the *resurrection*. Obviously the *first report* is that *first day* (the *women, Peter and John*, and the *two men* on the *road to Emmaus*. But there are other reports that have been dated to *within days, weeks, and months* of Jesus' death...reports that state that Jesus appeared to *named individuals* and to *groups of eyewitnesses*.

So...was Jesus really executed? The evidence is so strong that even *atheist historian Gerd Lüdemann* from the *University of Gottingen* said His *death by crucifixion* is *indisputable*.

That these encounters could have been hallucinations: According to experts, they state that this is *impossible*. Hallucinations *occur in individual brains*, like *dreams*, yet Jesus appeared to *groups of people* other than His disciples on *three different occasions*...including to more than **500** at one time (**I Corinthians 15:6**)!

But there are *three key facts* that most *scholars* (both *secular* and *theological*) consider as *basic*...facts that need to be *explained*. Take a look at the *facts* regarding these *three key questions*...*questions* that *require explanation*... and which *explanation* best account for these *facts*.

- **The empty tomb.**
- **Jesus' appearances after His death...“alive”!**
- **The disciples' belief that Jesus rose from the dead.**

Anyone can claim to be *divine* or be a *god*...but if Jesus backed up His claim by *returning from the dead*, then that was *indisputable evidence* He was telling the *truth*...He was who He said He was. **Paul** wrote a *rhetorical question*:

“Who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

~Romans 1:4

Was Jesus' tomb empty? Scholar **William Lane Craig** points out that *its location was known to both Christians and non-Christians alike*. So if it hadn't been empty, it would have basically been impossible for *a movement founded on the resurrection* to have exploded into existence in the same city where Jesus had been *publicly executed* just a few days or weeks before.

Jacob Kremer, Professor of NT studies at the *University of Vienna* stated that even Jesus' *opponents*...both the *religious* and *political leaders*...*implicitly admitted* the tomb was *vacant* by claiming that His body had been *stolen*. But nobody had a *motive* for taking the body, especially the disciples.

In *six* different passages Scripture states the tomb was *empty*. (**Luke 24:1-12**; **John 20:1-8**; **Acts 2:29-32**; **I Corinthians 15:3-5**; **Mark 28:1-10**; **Matthew 28:1-10**).

What about the disciples and their belief? *Two* prominent New Testament *scholars*, **Luke Timothy Johnson** at *Emory University* and **N.T. Wright** of the *University of St. Andrews*, have studied the *testimonies* of the disciples and have documented that the disciples were *willing to endure lives of deprivation and suffering* as a result of their proclamation that Jesus had *risen*. It's unlikely that they would have done that if they knew they were *propagating a lie*.

Did anyone see Jesus alive again? We have *nine documented historical sources*, both *inside* and *outside* the New Testament, that confirm the apostles' conviction that they *encountered* the resurrected Christ. Repeatedly,

these sources stood strong when people have tried to discredit them.

- Peter
- The 12 Apostles
- Over 500 at one time
- James...the half-brother of Jesus
- Paul

“This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses...Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ... this Jesus whom you crucified.”

~Acts 2:32, 36

II. THE RESURRECTION SAVES SINNERS:

There is no salvation without the physical resurrection of Christ, and no one can be saved without *believing* and *trusting* and *confessing* in it (**I Corinthians 15:17**...you are still in your sins).

“If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation...for ‘Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved’.”

~Romans 10:9-10, 13

Jesus Christ...Who is He?

A lot of people...and even some *religions* will admit that Jesus Christ was *a good man*...some will even say that He was *a prophet*. But He was much more than that...He is *God in human form*...He is *God incarnate* (**Philippians 2:7-8**).

But just as important as **who He is**...is **what He did**. He *died* on the cross and *rose* from the dead, to *pay the penalty* for our sins, and to *purchase* a place in heaven for us which He offers as a *free gift*.

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.”

~Romans 5:8-9

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

~Romans 6:23

When we realize that we are *sinners* and that we *can't save ourselves* we must be willing to *repent of our sin* and see that God, through His Son, Jesus Christ, *paid for our sin* and *offers us forgiveness as a free gift*...*grace*. We receive this gift of *grace* by *faith*!

Grace gives someone what they *can't earn*...and what they *don't deserve*. If we could make *restitution* for our sin...there would be no need for *forgiveness*. *Restitution* brings *payment* and a *settlement*. That's why the word *forgive* has the word *give* in it. *Forgiveness* isn't getting even...it's *giving* away all rights to get even.

That's what God does to us when we trust Christ...when we become a believer.

“There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

~Acts 4:12

“...Through His name (Jesus) everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.”

~Acts 10:42

If we *trust* in Christ...God no longer holds our sins against us. *Forgiveness* cost us nothing. That's why we call it *grace*. It may be *free* but it isn't *cheap*. It cost Jesus His life. That's why we call it *justice*. The *penalty* is *paid*.

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.”

~Ephesians 1:7

How *precious* is the news that God does not hold our sins against us! And how *beautiful* is Christ...whose blood made it right for God to do this! How *glorious* is His resurrection that defeated death!

“For this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.”

~Matthew 26:28

As Christians, we must always be prepared to give an answer for the **hope** that is in us (**I Peter 3:15**), namely, the **hope of eternal life**. Only the Lord's *victory over death*, *proven* by His *resurrection*, can *guarantee* us that heavenly *inheritance*. We need to be *prepared* and *equip* ourselves to *defend* and *proclaim* this *truth* as we witness to others about the risen Lord and Savior.

III. THE RESURRECTION SANCTIFIES BELIEVERS:

Sanctification...the progressive work of God that makes us more and more free from sin and more like Christ in our actual lives.

It is only through the power of God that lives can be *transformed*. We may work hard to *change* (*resolve... resolutions*)...but only God *transforms*.

“But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.”

~Romans 6:22

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

~II Corinthians 3:18

The *resurrection transformed Peter*...who the night before the *crucifixion* was so afraid, that *three times* he *denied* that he even *knew* Jesus. But when he saw an *empty tomb* ...when he saw Jesus *resurrected*...he became as *bold* as a lion. Some *50 days* later...he preached a sermon at **Pentecost** that established the Church (**Acts 2:22-32**).

IV. THE RESURRECTION GIVES VICTORY OVER DEATH:

Death put Jesus in a tomb...but His *righteousness* defeated death. If Jesus hadn't been raised from the dead, *there would be no victory over death*. Christ would have died and that would have been the *end of it*.

And *all* Jerusalem...*all* the *political* leaders...and *all* the *religious* leaders...even the *disciples* and those *closest* to Jesus...*thought that was the end*. But *on the third day*...He left those *grave clothes* that had been wrapped around Him much like a butterfly forsakes its cocoon. The *stone* was *rolled away*. It wasn't *rolled away* to let Jesus *out*...it was rolled away to let the disciples and others *in*...to be able to see that Jesus had *overcome death*...that He *rose* from the *dead*...that He was *resurrected*. And Jesus Christ is *alive* today!

“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

~I Corinthians 15:51-57

“...Jesus, because of the suffering of death that is crowned with glory and honor, by the grace of God, He might taste death for everyone...that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.”

~Hebrews 2:9, 14

“This Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But 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 2:23-24

That is why when we *grieve* over the loss of a loved one ...we *grieve* as one *with hope* verse those who *grieve without hope*.

V. THE RESURRECTION SECURES OUR HOPE:

Hope...not based on *wishful thinking*...but on the *reality* of God’s *promises*...*a confident anticipation*...*waiting for something to be actuated*.

Biblical **hope** isn’t “*for*” something...it’s hope “*in*” someone. **Hope in** Christ...what He *has done* for us and what He *has promised* He will do.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you”

~I Peter 1:3-4

“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead...”

~Philippians 3:10-11

Paul didn’t say that *if* Christ were *still in the grave*, we would be *mistaken* or *misguided*. He said *if* Christ has *not been raised*, we are *false witnesses*. He also said that our *personal faith* would be *worthless*...*empty* (**I Corinthians 15:14b, 17a**).

VI. THE RESURRECTION PROVIDES ETERNAL LIFE:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

~Ephesians 2:8-9

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”

~ Philippians 3:20-21

BECAUSE OF THE RESURRECTION:

- We have **VICTORY**. Victory over *death*...victory over *sin* ...victory over *temptation*. It's the *foundation for faith* that with death things *don't end*. In reality, they only *just begin*. *Changed lives...transformed lives*.
- We have **HOPE**. An *anxious* and *confident anticipation* of *heaven* (being face-to-face with God)...an *anxious* and *confident anticipation* of *seeing Jesus*...an *anxious* and *confident anticipation* of *being with God eternally*...a *confident anticipation* of Christ's return in victory.
- We have **EXPECTATON**. *Expectation* that He is *coming again*. *Maranatha*...come quickly Lord Jesus!
- We have a **FAITH**. A faith that makes us a **Christian**. A faith that established the **Church**...the **bride of Christ**...the **body of Christ**.
- We have the **CHURCH**. The **body of Christ**...the **bride of Christ**. With the Church came **Sunday Worship**. The original day of worship was **Saturday**...the **Jewish Sabbath**. Now we worship on the **first day of the week**...**resurrection day**. Two ordinances were given to the Church...**baptism** and **Lord's Supper**. **Baptism**...buried with Him in baptism, raised to walk in newness of life...to fulfill all righteousness. **Lord's Supper**...do this in remembrance of Me.
- **TIME** and **HISTORY** were split. The Gregorian calendar established **B.C.** ...before Christ and **A.D.** ...Anno Domini...in the year of our Lord. In recent times, there has been a push to replace it with **B.C.E** and **C.E.**, meaning "*before common era*" and "*common era*."

Did Jesus rise from the dead? I'm stating my eternity on it.
Are you willing to bet your eternity on the fact that He didn't?