

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Part 2

Scripture: Matthew 28:8–10

Code: 2402

INTRODUCTION

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the heart of the Christian faith. Christianity is a belief--a series of truths, doctrines, and principles based on the resurrection of Christ. When Jesus rose from the dead by the power of the Father, He proved He was exactly who He claimed to be, and that He accomplished what He came to accomplish. Second Corinthians 4:14 says "that he [God] who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also." Our belief in resurrection life is built on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because He lives, we shall live also (John 14:19).

A. The Declaration of Our Hope

Throughout Scripture we see the hope of resurrection. Death is not a dead-end; it's a thoroughfare to eternity.

1. Psalm 49:15--The psalmist wrote, "God will redeem my soul from the power of sheol."
2. Psalm 73:24--Asaph wrote that God would receive him to glory after he died.
3. Hosea 6:2--Hosea confidently asserted that God will raise up His people so they might live before Him.
4. Isaiah 26:19--Isaiah wrote, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust."
5. Daniel 12:2--"Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life."
6. Job 14:14--Job asked, "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."
7. Job 19:25-27--Job affirmed, "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my heart be consumed within me."

B. The Guarantee of Our Hope

1. The resurrection of Christ

The hope of God's people is predicated on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His resurrection guarantees ours. The apostle Paul said, "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20). No wonder the resurrection of Jesus Christ is mentioned more than a hundred times in the New Testament.

The resurrection may be denied, despised, and mocked. Only a fool would want to explain away the resurrection of Christ, because in so doing he guarantees his eternal doom. The only hope of eternal salvation--of being with God forever in glory, is the resurrection of Christ. To explain it away damns the human race.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the single greatest event in the history of the world. It guarantees the resurrection of every saint, no matter what happens to the body. Anyone who denies the literal bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a Christian because he misses the whole point of Christianity.

2. The argument of Paul

In 1 Corinthians 15 the apostle Paul gives a profound argument for the centrality of the resurrection

to the Christian faith.

a) There's no good explanation for the empty tomb if there is no resurrection

In verse 13 Paul says, "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen." That means we have to explain the disappearance of His body in some other way. We have to explain His undisturbed grave clothes somehow. Perhaps someone took His body. Maybe He never was dead-- He awoke in the coolness of the tomb, got up, and walked out. But those explanations don't make any sense given the facts.

b) Preaching the gospel is useless if there is no resurrection

In verse 14 Paul says, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain." The gospel says that men are sinners, and sinners need a Savior. Christ is that Savior. He paid the penalty for sin, conquered death, and rose from the grave. If He didn't rise, then He is dead, and His payment for sin was not accepted. He wasn't powerful enough. Preaching the gospel is useless when there is no good news to proclaim.

c) Faith is useless if there is no resurrection

Then Paul said, "Your faith is also vain" (v. 14). He repeats that statement in verse 17: "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain." It's pointless to believe the gospel if Christ didn't rise from the dead.

d) The apostles were liars if there is no resurrection

In verse 15 Paul says, "We are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not." Paul was saying that if Christ didn't rise, all the apostles were liars.

e) The power of sin remains if there is no resurrection

Paul continues in verse 17, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins." If Christ didn't rise, the power of sin remains unbroken. Therefore every man is under the domination of sin, forever damned. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not some negotiable reality; it is the cornerstone of the Christian faith.

f) The dead in Christ are lost if there is no resurrection

In verse 18 Paul says, "They also who are fallen asleep [died] in Christ are perished."

In verse 19 Paul concludes, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." If Christ didn't rise from the dead, Christians are the most pitiful people in the world. But Christ did rise!

REVIEW

I. THE TIME OF THE RESURRECTION (v. 1a)

"In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week."

II. THE EMOTIONS OF THE WOMEN (vv. 1b-10)

A. Sympathy (v. 1b)

"Mary Magdalene and the other Mary [came] to see the sepulcher."

B. Terror (vv. 2-7)

1. The angel's descent (vv. 2-4)

"Behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and become as dead men."

2. The angel's explanation (vv. 5-6b)

"The angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not; for I know that ye seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said."

3. The angel's invitation (v. 6c)

"Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

4. The angel's command (v. 7)

a) To exhort the disciples (v. 7a) "Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead."

LESSON

b) To enlist the disciples (v. 7b)"Behold, he goeth before you into Galilee. There shall ye see him; lo, I have told you."

Previously Jesus told the disciples, "After I am raised up again, I will go before you into Galilee" (Matt. 26:32). Galilee was the region where the Lord first ministered. That also is where He was first hated and rejected.

In some ways, Galilee was a microcosm of the world. Matthew, quoting Isaiah 9:2, said of it, "The people who sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them who sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up" (Matt. 4:16). Christ commissioned the disciples on a mountain in Galilee, saying, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19; NASB). Matthew's gospel ends with that Great Commission--Christ sending out His people with the message of the risen Christ.

Appearances of the Resurrected Christ in Jerusalem

Before meeting the disciples in Galilee, Christ appeared to them and others in Jerusalem on several occasions.

1. To Mary

On Sunday morning He appeared to Mary Magdalene near the grave. We will see the specifics of that appearance later in our study (see pp. xx-xx).

2. To Peter

Later on that same day Christ appeared personally to Peter (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5). The Lord was showing grace to one who so pointedly denied Him.

3. To two disciples

Later that afternoon Christ appeared to two disciples traveling to Emmaus. As they walked, the Lord joined them, teaching them what Scripture prophesied about Himself. Later He revealed Himself to them while they ate together (Luke 24:13-32).

4. To the ten disciples

On Sunday night, the disciples were gathered in a room when the Lord appeared to them. Luke 24:36 says, "As they thus spoke, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed that they had seen a spirit."

5. To Thomas

Since Thomas wasn't with the disciples that first Sunday night, eight days later Jesus appeared again, only this time Thomas was there (John 20:26-27). When Thomas saw Him he said, "My Lord and my God" (v. 28).

Prior to His ascension Christ appeared to His disciples numerous times. Acts 1:3 tells us that Christ "showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen by [the apostles] forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." But of all Christ's appearances, the most crucial was His appearance on the mountain in Galilee.

C. Joy (v. 8)

"[The women] departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his disciples word."

The Greek word translated "did run" is the main verb. The angel said "Go!" and they did, running into the city to find the disciples and tell them that Jesus was raised from the dead.

1. Encountering disbelief

When the women found the apostles and delivered their message, the apostles didn't believe them (Mark 16:13). That confirms that the disciples didn't steal Christ's body--they didn't even believe the resurrection had occurred (cf. Luke 24:10-11, 22- 25)!

2. Making a discovery

When Mary Magdalene told Peter and John about the empty tomb, they followed her to the sepulcher.

a) John and Peter(1) Their arrivalJohn 20:4-5 says, "They [Peter and John] ran both together; and the other disciple [John] did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher. And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went not in."Verses 6-7 say, "Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher, and seeth the linen clothes lying there, and the cloth, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself." That indicates there had been no struggle; Christ simply arose and left the tomb.(2) Their responseVerse 8 says, "Then went in also that other disciple, who came first to the sepulcher, and he saw, and believed." John had a heart of faith. He quickly moved from curiosity to faith. Verse 9 says, "For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead." They had heard Jesus tell them about His resurrection, but they didn't understand it. They were unwilling for Him to die, so they eliminated from their minds the need for Him to rise again.Verse 10 says, "Then the disciples went away again to their own home." They went away to try to determine what happened. They didn't appear to make any serious investigation about the disappearance of Christ's body.b) Mary Magdalene(1) Mary's arrivalBut Mary didn't leave; she was ever the devoted follower. Verses 11-14 say, "Mary stood outside the sepulcher weeping; and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulcher, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back."Mary doesn't appear to have been startled by the presence of the angels. Apparently her sorrow overpowered her ability to realize she was speaking with angels. She responded in a similar manner when she arrived at the tomb earlier. Now she was carrying on a conversation with two angels about the location of Christ's body. Perhaps she assumed they were men. Scripture is replete with occasions when angels took on the appearance of men (e.g., Gen. 18--19).(2) Christ's disguiseAfter turning to leave the tomb, she "saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus" (v. 14). Mary was very emotional by this time, and it is quite possible that her state of mind prevented her from recognizing Jesus. But also after the resurrection, no one knew who Jesus was unless He allowed them to. In His resurrection glory He was changed, so He had to reveal Himself to people. How else can we explain the circumstances involving the two disciples who walked and talked with Him, yet didn't know who He was until He disclosed Himself to them (Luke 24:13-32)?(3) Christ's revelationJesus said to Mary, "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him from here, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away" (John 20:15). Mary may have thought the grave was available for only a few days, and that Jesus' body had been moved. Verse 16 says, "Jesus saith unto her, Mary." Jesus addressed her in Aramaic--her own language--which added a personal touch. Instantly she knew who He was. Verse 16 says, "She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master." The title Rabboni, a step above Rabbi, was used only for a highly exalted teacher. Mark 16:9 tells us Mary was the first person to see the resurrected Christ.(4) Christ's commandIn John 20:17 Jesus tells Mary, "Touch me not ["Don't cling to Me"]." That's because Mary grabbed Him. She had lost Him once--she wasn't going to lose Him again. The pain of His death and absence was more than she could bear. Then Jesus said, "I am not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (v. 17).Two things are important to note from that verse. First, before His death Jesus called His disciples friends (John 15:15). But from this point on He would call them brethren. Why? Because His death and resurrection brought them completely into the family of God. Paul said we "are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Hebrews 2:11 says Christ "is not ashamed to call them brethren." But most important are the words

Christ used to emphasize the new relationship: "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." The disciples abandoned Christ to His captors, but in spite of that, He would draw them to Himself. Now they had the same Father, God Himself. (5) Mary's response John 20:18 says, "Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her." She was always willing to help her Lord fulfill His divine agenda. As we return to Matthew 28, let's establish the scene. The women left the empty tomb to tell the disciples. Mary Magdalene returned to the grave, and Peter and John followed. After Peter and John went into the tomb, they returned home. Mary lingered and saw Christ. Now she left to tell the disciples what she saw and heard. While the other women were still on their way to find all the disciples, the Lord supernaturally transported Himself to meet them.

D. Worship (v. 9)

1. Christ's greeting (v. 9a)

"As they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail [Gk., chairete]." There was Christ in His resurrection glory, but what did He say--"Hi"! He greeted them with the normal greeting of their day. It was how people would greet each other as they passed on the roads. In a very simple and warm way Jesus stopped the women and greeted them. Although He was glorified, He had not lost His human tenderness. He communes with holy angels and the Trinity, but He also communes with men and women who walk the dusty roads of life.

2. The women's gratitude (v. 9b)

"They came and held him by the feet, and worshiped him."

They knew He was the risen Christ, so they worshiped Him. He was to be adored, praised, glorified, and honored. They did what Paul says everyone should do: "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father" (Phil. 2:10-11). They paid Him homage as to God.

When I look at the cross I feel sympathy. When I study the resurrection, I sense the earthquake that revealed the empty tomb. I'm filled with terror and the fear of almighty power. Then I become alert and alive to the resurrection, and my heart is filled with joy in seeing the risen Christ. Then I fall at His feet in worship.

Evidence for the Resurrection

Evidence for the resurrection is abundantly available. The women were immediate eyewitnesses of the evidence that the resurrection took place: the broken seal, the empty tomb, the grave clothes, the unconscious soldiers, and the testimony of the angels. But when they touched the risen Lord, they knew He was not a figment of their imaginations. He was no apparition. They held Him by His feet. Sir Edward Clarke said, "As a lawyer I have made a prolonged study of the evidences for the events of the first Easter Day. To me the evidence is conclusive, and over and over again in the High Court I have secured the verdict on evidence not nearly so compelling. Inference follows on evidence, and a truthful witness is always artless and distains effect. The Gospel evidence for the resurrection is of this class, and as a lawyer I accept it unreservedly as the testimony of truthful men to facts they were able to substantiate."

Professor Thomas Arnold, author of the three-volume History of Rome and an appointee to the chair of modern history at Oxford University, wrote, "The evidence for our Lord's life and death and resurrection may be, and often has been, shown to be satisfactory; it is good according to the common rules for distinguishing good evidence from bad. Thousands and tens of thousands of persons have gone through it piece by piece as carefully as every judge summing up on a most important case. I have myself done it many times over, not to persuade others but to satisfy myself. I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer,

than the great sign which God hath given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead" (for documentation and attestation from other experts see Josh McDowell's Evidence That Demands a Verdict [San Bernardino, Calif.: Here's Life, 1979], pp. 179-263).

E. Hope (v. 10)

"Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid; go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me."

Their hope was clear. The risen Christ would again manifest Himself. Jesus repeated the same message the angel gave them, thus showing us the source of the angelic message.

CONCLUSION

Matthew's treatment of the resurrection is simple and unpretentious. It's not something he worked hard at trying to prove. Matthew stated the simple, convincing truth. Before Christ's time on earth came to an end, He appeared to His people so they might confirm His resurrection. From them He selected who would write the New Testament--the record of His resurrection and the meaning of it.

What Does the Resurrection Prove?

1. That the Bible is the Word of God

Over and over again Jesus said He would rise in three days, and He did. The resurrection affirms that the record of Scripture is true.

2. That Jesus Christ is the Son of God

Christ claimed to be the Son of God and to have power over death. His resurrection proves He did.

3. That salvation is complete

Christ conquered sin, death, and hell on the cross, and He rose victorious to prove that He did.

4. That the church was established

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus says, "I will build my church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it." The phrase "gates of hades" was a colloquial expression for death. Death couldn't stop Christ from building His church, and His resurrection proved it.

5. That judgment is coming

In John 5:27 Jesus says the Father had "given him authority to execute judgment." He has the power to raise the dead and judge them. Some will experience enter eternal life and some eternal judgment (vv. 28-29). The Judge is alive, and one day His court will be in session to determine the eternal destiny of every man and woman.

6. That heaven is waiting

In John 14:2 Jesus says, "In my Father's house are many mansions.... I go to prepare a place for you." Heaven is waiting; the risen Christ is even now preparing it for His own.

The resurrection proves it all. I trust you not only believe in the resurrection, but also have received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, for the one naturally leads to the other.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What does Scripture teach about the believer's hope?

2. What guarantees the believer's resurrection?

3. To show the centrality of the resurrection to the Christian faith, Paul presents a classic argument in 1 Corinthians 15. Explain the various statements Paul makes in the course of his argument.

4. How did Paul conclude his argument (1 Cor. 15:19)?

5. Where was Christ planning to commission His disciples to take the gospel to the world (Matt. 28:7)?

6. To whom did Christ appear in Jerusalem after He was raised?

7. What kind of reception did the women receive when they told the disciples what the angel said

(Mark 16:13)?

8. Describe the reactions of John and Peter when they examined the empty tomb (John 20:4-10).
9. What did Mary Magdalene do after Peter and John left the tomb (John 20:11-14)?
10. Why was Mary unable to recognize Jesus at first?
11. When did Mary recognize Jesus (John 20:16)?
12. Why did Christ refer to His disciples as brethren after His resurrection?
13. How did the other women respond when Christ personally revealed Himself to them (Matt. 28:9)?
15. What does the resurrection prove? Explain.

Pondering the Principles

1. Read the section on the declaration of our hope (see p. 1). It surveys what the Old Testament says about life after death. As you read through and study the New Testament, make a list of verses that refer to the believer's hope. As your list expands, you will have a definitive record of what Scripture teaches on this subject. You also will have a source of great comfort when you are besieged with the trials of life.
2. When the risen Christ appeared before the women, they worshiped Him. Read Philippians 2:5-11. Why is Jesus Christ worthy of worship? Why did God exalt Him? Who should worship Christ? Verse 5 tells us to have the same attitude Christ did. Verses 1-4 spell out that attitude. Does your lifestyle reveal that you daily confess Jesus Christ is Lord? Don't be just a hearer of God's Word; be a doer (James 1:22). Be open about your love for Jesus Christ, just like the women who fell at His feet.

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