

Resurrection Sunday

April 5, 2015

Truth and Meaning

On December 17, 1903, at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina the Wright brothers finally succeeded in keeping their airplane in the sky for 59 seconds. After the flight they rushed to telegram their sister in Dayton, Ohio to tell her about their great accomplishment. It read: "First sustained flight today 59 seconds. Hope to be home by Christmas." Their sister was so excited that she rushed to the newspaper office and gave the telegram to the editor. The next morning the headline stated, "Popular local bicycle merchants to be home by Christmas."

The editor missed the scoop of the century, because he missed the point of the telegram. This is what happens at times with the good news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. People miss the point. You see, there are people who reject Christianity because they don't think it's true. Jesus didn't really rise up from the dead—period. But there are other people who are indifferent, not because they don't think the resurrection of Christ is true, but because they do not know what difference it makes.

Therefore, I want to answer two questions this morning: the truth question and the meaning question. Did the resurrection of Jesus Christ really happen? And then, what difference does it make. Let's begin with the truth question; did it really happen? First, you should know that Jesus said that he would be crucified, die and then be raised up from the dead. Let's read from Matthew 20.

Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them,
¹⁸ "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death,
¹⁹ and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again."
(Matthew 20:17-19)

Jesus spoke about his crucifixion and resurrection several times, not just here.¹ Now the fact Jesus predicted his own resurrection doesn't prove that it

¹ Matthew 16:21-23; 17:22; 20:17-19; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22; 18:31-33; John 10:14-17

happened. But it points strongly in that direction and here's why. There are people who want to honor Jesus as a man of integrity and faithful teacher. But his integrity and his faithfulness to teach the truth come into question if he said he would be raised up from the dead and he really wasn't. It is difficult to honor Jesus as a good man and the Savior if he was deluded about both his sacrifice for sins and his resurrection.

Secondly, we believe that the resurrection of Christ is true, because the tomb was empty.

Now after the Sabbath, as the first *day* of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. ²And 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 on it.

³His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. ⁴And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead *men*. ⁵But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.
(Matthew 28:1-7)

Some people have said that Jesus never died he simply revived in the cool of the tomb and rolled the stone away. But this goes against the brutal realities of the intense flogging and loss of blood as well as the crucifixion itself. Plus the fact that he was wrapped up like a mummy with 100 pounds of spices.² After such a great loss of blood and then being crucified and pierced by a spear in his side, is it realistic to think Jesus merely revived in the tomb, rolled away the one ton stone and then overcame the Roman guards?

Others assert that the disciples stole the body of Jesus Christ. But at his arrest all the disciples fled in fear. And Pilate the Roman governor sealed the tomb and had Roman soldiers guard it. Would the fearful disciples risk facing Roman soldiers for a hoax?

I could go on with several other reasons why the resurrection of Jesus Christ is true. But I'll give you just one more—there were witnesses who saw the risen Jesus Christ.

² Matthew 15:15; John 19:31-33

For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. ⁶ After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷ After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. ⁸ Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

When the apostle Paul wrote this it was about 25 years after the Christ's resurrection. And so the early church was growing not because of a fantastic fantasy, but because there were eye witnesses, who saw the risen, living Son of God, Jesus Christ. Many historians and skeptics after looking at both positive and negative evidence have concluded that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the best established fact of human history.

But now, let's move on from the reality of the resurrection to its meaning. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not only true, but it is utterly crucial and vital and relevant for your life now in 2015AD.

It often stuns people to learn that God does not want you to prove your strength by serving Him; instead he wants to prove His greatness by serving you. For example Isaiah 64:4 proclaims,

For since the beginning of the world
Men have not heard nor perceived by the ear,
Nor has the eye seen any God besides You,
Who acts for the one who waits for Him.

Or from 2 Chronicles 16:9 we learn,

For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the
whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those
whose heart is loyal to Him.³

No one ever dreamed that God was as like this. God had to reveal it to us in the Bible. And so the Christian good news is not a help wanted sign. Rather God says I am here to help you. And just as God works for those who trust Him,

³ See also Acts 17:24, 25

His Son Jesus Christ works for those who believe in him. Therefore, if you asked Jesus, who reveals God to us, why he was born, why he ministered and taught and healed people and why he sacrificed his life for us, here is how he would respond.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served,
but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.
(Mark 10:45)

If the resurrection of Jesus Christ is true, and it is, then he is here to continue to serve us. He can come to us and meet the deepest needs of our hearts. In Matthew 11:28 Jesus said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And in John 8:12 Jesus promised,

I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall
not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.

Jesus Christ is not looking for people to work for him. He is here to serve us. He desires to fill our lives with peace and to remove the darkness from our hearts about what life is all about. Jesus Christ is alive and desires to serve us and to meet our deepest needs. And the most pressing needs we have are not financial needs, or health needs, or work needs, or family needs, as important as these are. The greatest needs you and I have are these:

#1 – The need to know that our sins are totally forgiven and to be put in a right relationship with God.

And

#2 The need to overcome death.

What makes the resurrection of Jesus Christ so important and so wonderful to many of us is that it is the confirmation that God desires to work for us and meet these needs through Jesus Christ. The sin problem has been dealt with.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace
with God through our Lord Jesus Christ
(Romans 5:1)

By our faith in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for our sins, we are justified, that is declared innocent from all of our sins. This gives us peace with God. And if you have peace with God what in the world could ever shale you?

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the

forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace
(Ephesians 1:7)

Through the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ on the cross we are totally forgiven all of our sins. All of our sins from the wrongs we do to others to our not loving God with our whole heart were paid for at the cross. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the declaration of God that He accepted Christ's work on our behalf. 2 Corinthians 5:21 declares that God made Jesus Christ "who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

By God's grace to us in Christ we are clothed in righteousness not soiled by sin. That is the first great need we have: to be free from sin. And our redemption from sin leads to Jesus Christ rescuing us from our other great need: the need to overcome death. The wages of sin is death.⁴ God told Adam that when he sinned, dying he would die.⁵

Since the time of Adam everyone dies. About 60 million people die every year around the world. About 150,000 die each day, 6,000 people die each hour, 100 people die each minute and 2 people die each and every second.⁶ This should slap us awake and tell us that something is wrong. Death is not a natural part of life. Death is an enemy.⁷

We were made to live. And I want to live forever! But I cannot prevent my death, nor can any scientist or doctor in the world. But God can and will through Jesus Christ. In John 11:25 Jesus Christ proclaimed,

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

This is a tremendous promise. And Christ's resurrection guarantees the believer's resurrection to life. Now when will this happen? Here is the answer.

But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming.

⁴ Romans 6:23a

⁵ Genesis 2:17 – this is what the Hebrew literally says in the verse.

⁶ Information taken from www.wholesomeowrds.org/missions/greatc.html

⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:26

(1 Corinthians 15:20-23)

The great meaning of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is that our lives do not need to meet a dead end. When Christ returns, and every day brings us closer to that event, all of God's people will receive everlasting life.

In Acts 17 we are told that a day is coming when God will judge every human being who has ever lived or ever will live. They will be judged by the man Jesus Christ. And God has given assurance of this judgment day to all by raising His Son, Jesus Christ up from the grave.⁸

If you believe in Jesus Christ and trust him as your living Lord and savior, all of your sins are wiped clean, the power of God's Spirit works within you. And Jesus Christ will meet your needs and grant you everlasting life.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
(John 3:16)

⁸ Acts 17:30, 31