

Resurrection 3

What's the Big Deal About the Resurrection?

1 Corinthians 15:13-18

Why is the resurrection so important? Well, without it, Jesus didn't rise from the grave/ our faith is worthless/ my preaching has no value/ all the apostles are liars because they said Jesus arose/ those who put their faith in Christ and died are just – dead/ and this life is all there is/ no need to obey the Bible – even read the Bible/ live like we want, no rules, no morals.

That's not ME saying that, that's the apostle Paul saying that inspired by the Holy Spirit. Listen to him in 1 Corinthians 15:13:

1 Corinthians 15:13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.

14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.

15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up — if in fact the dead do not rise.

16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.

17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!

18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

You see, without the resurrection Jesus didn't rise from the grave, our faith is worthless, my preaching has no value, all the apostles are liars because they said Jesus arose, those who put their faith in Christ and died are just – dead, and this life is all there is, no need to obey the Bible – even read the Bible, live like we want, no rules, no morals.

20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

When we look in the Old Testament at the sacrificial system, rituals, laws, feasts, prophecies, we see they all pointed to Jesus Christ coming as our substitute and Savior.

This is why Paul begins chapter 15 by saying this:

1 Corinthians 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand,

2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you — unless you believed in vain.

3 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,

Paul had gone to Corinth and preached and many believed. The message he preached to them was the Gospel: Christ died for our sins and He was buried and He rose again the third day.

But notice that Paul uses the phrase "according to the Scriptures" twice. "Scriptures" refers to the Old Testament.

It's a historical fact that Christ died. It's a spiritual fact that Christ died FOR OUR SINS. Those three words explain the spiritual truth of this historical fact. A lot of people were crucified by Romans. But only One ever died for sins of the world. And He did so "according to the Scriptures."

But, He not only DIED according to the Scriptures, He also rose again the third day "according to the Scriptures" Job, David, Isaiah all prophesied that the Messiah would be raised from the dead and live again.

Even the Jewish feasts were arranged to prophecy and point to the coming Savior's death AND resurrection. His death was typified in the Passover (Lamb, spotless, slain, blood applied).

But the first day following the Sabbath after Passover was the Feast of Firstfruits (Leviticus 23:9-14). The firstfruits – or the very first armful of grain – of the harvest were presented to God. The priest would wave the bundle of firstfruits before God as sign that entire harvest belonged to God.

Now the Sabbath is the 7th day. The day after is the first day of week, Sunday, the day Christ arose. As the Lamb of God, Jesus died on Passover. As the firstfruits, He arose from the dead three days later on the first day of week.

When Jesus was raised from dead, it was God's way of assuring US that one day we too shall be raised from the dead that we, too, will be part of the future harvest of souls.

By the way, nowhere in the Bible do we read about a general judgment – one great judgment at the end of the world. Actually the Bible teaches us that there are five specific and distinct judgments. (See "God's Plan" chart on Studies page.)

- The Judgment of Sin took place on the cross as Christ died in our place. (1 Peter 3:18)
- The Judgment of Disobedience happens during THIS life when believers disobey God and refuse to judge ourselves by repenting, by admitting our sin and asking God to forgive us. (1 Corinthians 11:31-32)
- The Judgment Seat of Christ is the judgment of believer's works for rewards. It will take place at the first phase of the second coming of Christ (the Rapture). (Romans 14:10)
- The Judgment of Nations will occur at the second phase of the second coming of Christ (the Revelation, or return) in the valley of Jehoshaphat at the end of the tribulation. (Matthew 25:31-32)
- The Great White Throne Judgment will take place at the end of the thousand year reign of Christ when Jesus judges the works of unbelievers. (Revelation 20:5-15)

Back to the subject of resurrection. When Jesus was raised from dead, it was God's way of assuring US that one day we will also be raised from the dead and be part of the future harvest.

23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.

You see, God has an order, sequence in the Resurrection. Like we saw last week in John 5:25-29, there's a resurrection of life in which all who have trusted in Christ will be raised. And there's a resurrection of condemnation in which everyone else – all those people who didn't trust Christ – will be raised.

You can see on the chart that the two resurrections are separated by 1,000 years. Revelation 20:4 says:

Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

We'll come back to verse 5 in a minute. But, first, I want us to notice the order of the first resurrection. Turn to Matthew 27:50-53. Christ is the firstfruits. He was #1. But, look what else happened when Christ

died and was buried and rose again on the third day.

Matthew 27:50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

51 Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,

52 and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;

53 and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

When Jesus died, some saints (Christians) were raised from the dead at the same time. Did you notice in verse 52?

52 and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53 and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

This resurrection was a bodily resurrection "bodies"; it was a partial resurrection "many" (not all); it was a selective resurrection, only "saints" arose. Not a single lost person was involved.

And, verse 53, it was a delayed resurrection. Although the graves were opened when Jesus died, their resurrection didn't take place until after Christ arose. HE is the firstfruits.

What a beautiful picture of the Feast of Firstfruits! In the Old Testament, the priest waved a bundle from the future harvest before God. It was a promise of the harvest to come.

And Christ, "the firstfruits" after rising from the dead, didn't ascend to heaven by Himself, He took a bundle of resurrected saints with Him – a pledge, a promise of the future harvest!

1 Thessalonians 4 gives us further details of the first resurrection.

1 Thessalonians 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

But THIS resurrection is only saved people! Remember what Revelation 20:5 said?

Revelation 20:5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

This is the first time the phrase "first resurrection" is used in Bible. As we saw last week, the bodies of all unbelievers stay in their graves another 1,000 years and are then raised for the Great White Throne judgment.

Why is the resurrection so important? Because every one of us here is headed for a resurrection. The question is: WHICH resurrection will we be in? Revelation 20:6 goes on to say

20:6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Every one of us here WILL be resurrected. The question is will we be in the first resurrection, the resurrection of life – or the second resurrection, the resurrection of death. Your personal faith in Jesus Christ determines your destiny.

Now, let me ask you this: Why is the resurrection so important to YOU? What difference does it make in your life? What difference has it made in the way you live?

Are you living NOW in the reality of eternity – the reality that you WILL be resurrected/ you WILL be judged?

Listen to these words from Paul to the church at Colosse.

Colossians 3:1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Live NOW with eternity in mind. Let's pray.