

God's Big Deal

Luke 24:1 ESV But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. **2** And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, **3** but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. **4** While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. **5** And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? **6** He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, **7** that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." **8** And they remembered his words, **9** and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. **10** Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, **11** but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. **12** But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

- I. Once again we find ourselves on another Resurrection Sunday. We are here to celebrate and consider the fact that Jesus Christ, though publicly crucified for the sins of the world, is no longer dead, but lives forevermore.
 - A. This places Jesus in a most unique position.
 1. Many men are considered great and influential in their times and spheres. Muhammad was the prophet of Islam, Vladimir Lenin was the Russian Communist revolutionary. Howard Hughes was the billionaire aviator, movie producer and oil baron. These men were regarded as great in the areas of religion, politics and finance.
 - a) In their success, they each have two things that even Jesus doesn't have: a dead body and a tomb to keep it in.
 - b) You can go to Medina, Saudi Arabia and there you will find the tomb of Muhammad. You can go to Moscow and see the preserved body of Vladimir Lenin. In Houston you can find the grave of Howard Hughes.
 2. No matter how long you look, there is no possibility that you ever find the remains of Jesus Christ in some tomb. "He is not here, but is risen!"
 - B. **Revelation 1:17 ESV** When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, **18** and **the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore**, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.
 - C. Friday night I spoke at David and Caty's house about the horrors of the crucifixion and stated that the murder of Jesus was the biggest miscarriage of justice in human history; that it was a more significant crime than 9-11, the bombing of Pearl Harbor, or even the Holocaust.
 1. You can only reach this conclusion when you consider the holiness, beauty and purity of the one that was crucified. He was like a flawless rose, perfect in beauty, that is nonetheless cast to the ground and was trampled, as Mark Twain said, releasing it's fragrance on the heel that crushed it.

2. **Isaiah 50:5 ESV** The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward. **6** I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.
 3. But to understand the magnitude of his sacrifice, you must also consider the unworthiness of those for whom he died. Never make the mistake of thinking that Jesus died for you because he saw something good in you. Rather, he clearly saw all the bad, but because he was good, chose to die for you.
 4. **Romans 5:6 ESV** For while we were **still weak**, at the right time Christ died for **the ungodly**. **7** For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— **8** but God shows his love for us in that **while we were still sinners**, Christ died for us.
- D. But in contrast to the horror of the crucifixion, the resurrection of Christ Jesus is the single most wonderful and significant event in human history. Bigger than the end of World War I or II, more important than the founding of America, or the discovery of penicillin. The resurrection of Jesus will still be garnering the praise of redeemed men and angels long after all of those other things are long forgotten. Eternity is not long enough for him to receive the praise he is due!
1. But have you ever wondered why this is so? Though very few Christians would ever dare ask, have you ever honestly wondered...why is the resurrection of Jesus such a big deal?
 2. Let's have the courage to examine that question and see if we can come to a satisfying conclusion.
- E. On the surface it would seem like anytime someone rises from the dead, its a big deal. But how do we distinguish Jesus' resurrection, especially since he wasn't the only one in the Bible to rise from death?
1. In addition to Christ, there are eight other people, seven of them identified at least by family, that we are told were raised from death in the Bible.
 - a) Because three resurrections occurred in the Old Testament, we cannot say that resurrection is an exclusively New Covenant privilege.
 - b) Jesus himself raised at least another three people from death during his earthly ministry, and two more were raised through the ministry of the Apostles Peter and Paul during the course of their ministries.
 2. How do the circumstances of Christ's death and subsequent resurrection compare to the others in the Bible?
 - a) We know that 5 of those resurrected in scripture died from various sicknesses, one died in battle, and one died from falling out of a second story window after falling asleep during one of Paul's lengthy sermons! It is not recorded how the remaining one died, and Jesus of course was crucified.
 - b) While we don't know exactly how long all of these people had been dead, we at least know that Lazarus was dead for four days, one day longer than Jesus.
 3. So considering all of this, is Jesus resurrection just one of nine similar stories in scripture?

- F. It is so important for us to have a clear understanding of why the resurrection of Jesus is unique and universally important!
1. Most Christians know that “Jesus died for our sins”, which is absolutely true! But have you ever asked yourself what Jesus rose for? It is important not to get Christ’s death out of balance with his resurrection.
 2. “Some go so far as to have a crucifix in their homes or around their necks with a corpse hanging on it. Certainly such a picture elicits remorse and pity. But does it offer hope? Does it suggest that sins are forgiven, or just that they are the cause of such a vile punishment, of the innocent dying in the place of the wicked?” -Daniel B. Wallace, Professor, New Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary
 3. The Resurrection is the taproot of all of the Christian’s hope.
- II. The significance of Christ’s resurrection can’t be measured by how he died, how many others were raised before or after him, or how long he was dead. Though there are other things, we understand the importance of Christ’s rising by considering three factors: who was raised, how he was raised, and what his being raised means to us.
- A. First we will consider who was raised.
1. Jesus (as we saw clearly in John 5) was unashamed to declare that he was none other than God Himself. Part of his prerogative as God was the power to lay his life down and take it up again.
 - a) **John 10:17 ESV** For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. **18** No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”
 - b) Every other resurrection in scripture depended on the intervention of another, usually the prayer of an OT prophet or NT Apostle, calling for a demonstration of God’s power and mercy through resurrection.
 - c) But Christ proved his divinity when he authoritatively took his own life back after death, exercising his will and demonstrating of his power. He needed no intermediary in order to rise from the dead. Paul also notes that the resurrection affirmed Christ’s true identity...
 2. **Romans 1:3 ESV** concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh **4** and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness **by his resurrection from the dead**, Jesus Christ our Lord
 - a) Paul is saying that Jesus’ natural family line made him the heir to the throne of David.
 - b) But it was his rising from the dead that declared he was the heir of Yahweh God, to be seated forever at his right hand.
- B. Let’s look at how he was raised.
1. I’ve mentioned that Jesus was instrumental in his own resurrection. But in the book of Acts, the Apostles say over and over that God the Father raised Jesus from the dead. and in places like Romans 1 and 8, it says that he was raised by the work of the Holy Spirit. What is the take home here?

- a) Jesus resurrection was not an answer to a petition for mercy, similar to when Peter prayed for Tabitha to rise because someone asked him to. Instead, his death and resurrection were part of a pre-determined plan involving the consent and activity of the entire Trinity.
 - b) **Acts 2:23 ESV** this Jesus, delivered up according to the **definite plan** and **foreknowledge of God**, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. **24** God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.
 2. In fact, without the resurrection, God's plan would have to have been deemed a total failure. he would have been shown as less than sovereign.
 3. "If Christ is not risen from the dead, the long course of God's redemptive acts to save his people ends in a dead-end street, in a tomb. If the resurrection of Christ is not reality, then we have no assurance that God is the *living* God, for death has the last word. Faith is futile because the object of that faith has not vindicated himself as the Lord of life. Christian faith is then incarcerated in the tomb along with the final and highest self-revelation of God in Christ--if Christ is indeed dead." George Eldon Ladd
 4. Jesus was raised in order to fulfill the plan to save the cosmos from the ravages of sin. But more importantly, the plan was designed so that Jesus would be the recipient of all the glory that he alone is due.
 - a) **John 17:1b ESV** "Father, the hour has come; **glorify your Son** that the Son may glorify you, **2** since **you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.**
 - b) **John 16:14 ESV** He (the Holy Spirit) **will glorify me**, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.
 5. In Philippians 2, Paul declares that on the basis of Christ's sacrifice, God has exalted him, giving him the highest name and promising him universal worship at the last day.
- III. Let's turn our attention to what it means to us that Christ was raised.
- A. The resurrection is the means through which I escape sins clutches.
 1. **Romans 6:5 ESV** For if we have been united with him in a death like his, **we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6** We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, **so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9** We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. **10** For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. **11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.**
 - a) Paul is saying that just as our sin and it's power died with Jesus on the cross, we now have (through the resurrection) the right to live free of sin.
 - b) As Jesus has died **to** sin, once for all, he now lives **to** God. If you are believer in Jesus Christ, the Bible says you are **in** Christ.

- c) That means that if he is dead to sin, you are dead to sin. It means if he is alive to God, you are alive to God.
 - 2. Paul says that this reality **must** define you as a Christian, “you also must **consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God** in Christ Jesus”.
 - a) Does this mean you’ll never sin anymore?
 - b) No! It means when you do, you realize that your sin has died on the cross and confess, not just what you’ve done, but that you are acting outside of the identity that Christ purchased for you. You need to declare, “I’m not dead in my sin anymore! I’m alive in Christ!”
- B. Second, the resurrection of Jesus means that I can have a heavenly perspective.
 - 1. In the book of Colossians, Paul says that when we were in our sin, we were preoccupied with what he calls the “elemental spirits of the world”. What must we have and fight for? What are the rules of the game? What does success and failure look like?, etc.
 - a) But now in Christ, we are dead to both our own sin and the ongoing influence of the world. Therefore he says...
 - b) **Colossians 3:1 ESV** If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.**
 - 2. Because of Christ’s resurrection power, I can begin to live like I’m in heaven right now, with my mind on things above, not earthly things!
 - a) My life can be defined by worship and fellowship with Jesus instead of striving for stuff and status. I don’t have to submit to the deception of temptation anymore because in Christ I know the truth, and the truth has set me free!
 - b) Because Christ is my life, I can bow out of the rat race! I don’t have to fight to get ahead because Jesus has given me everything I need for life and godliness! I can truly love people, not struggling to be acknowledged or accepted, because I have been perfectly loved and accepted by the one who will never leave me or forsake me.
 - 3. Why wait to die to enjoy our heavenly citizenship? Because of the resurrection, we can cross into the promised land right now!
- C. Lastly, Christ’s resurrection is the promise of a future, guaranteed, actual resurrection that I too will experience.
 - 1. Paul spent all 58 verses of 1 Corinthians 15 making this point. He says that Christ is “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”. If you think that Jesus is satisfied to save just your soul, think again! He has saved your spirit by what we call justification, he is currently saving your soul through a process called sanctification, but his work will not be done until he has gloriously resurrected your body at the last day, together with all the saints completing his work.
 - 2. But he’s not going to simply resurrect your raggedy, broken down sick and diseased body...you’re getting an upgrade, of which Jesus’ resurrected body is the prototype. Here’s how Paul describes it...

3. **1 Corinthians 15:53 ESV** For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. **54** When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” **55** “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”
 4. On that day all of the saints lost to the oceans, burned in fire, disintegrated on the battlefield, or forgotten in the sands of time will rise imperishable and immortal to serve their king in a glorious new body for all eternity. And all of this because of the resurrection of the Lord.
- IV. Would you not agree that the resurrection is God’s biggest deal? It is the means by which he glorified the Son, set us free from sin’s power, and gives us a new perspective. The resurrection of Jesus is the promise of a new body in a new creation. It is the cause for Jesus to receive praise, glory and honor throughout all eternity.
- A. **Revelation 5:12 ESV** “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”
 - B. Is there any reason not to enter in to the New Life that Jesus has purchased for you today?
 - C. “For too long we’ve called unbelievers to ‘invite Jesus into your life’. Jesus doesn’t want to be in your life. Your life is a wreck. Jesus calls you into his life. And his life isn’t boring, or purposeless, or static. It’s wild and exhilarating and unpredictable.” -Russell D. Moore