

Resurrection Results

Easter Message

Selected Scripture

Introduction

We are going to focus upon the truth of the resurrection today. I will give seven basic thoughts, or facts, about this event that so shapes us. I hope, even though we are crossing ground that has been covered and should be re-covered, that it will kindle in our hearts afresh, a flame and a passion for Jesus Christ, who is indeed, alive.

Truths Related to the Resurrection of Christ

Let me begin by giving several truths related to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1. Truth number one, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is an essential element of saving faith.

Look at Romans 10:9.

... 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;

In other words, an essential element in saving faith *must* be, not only the declaration of, but the belief in the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Truth number two, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is an essential element of the gospel.

If this is true, then this is what we preach, this is what we share, this is what we teach, this is what we tell. If one must know and believe that He is alive, then we must tell it. This is an essential element of the gospel.

Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers, as recorded in I Corinthians 15:1-4,

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,

by which also you are saved, . . .

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

and that He was buried, and that He was raised [from the dead] on the third day according to the Scriptures,

Now, because of these truths, we would then expect this fundamental truth of scripture to be taught through the apostle's doctrine – and it is, which leads us to our next statement of truth.

3. Truth number three, the resurrection is an essential element in the apostle's teaching.

In Acts 13:30, Paul is standing in the synagogue in Antioch, declaring,

... God raised Him from the dead;

This is the essential theme in the apostle's doctrine and teaching. It is this truth that substantiated all they believed and taught.

In Acts 17:18, Paul is at Athens being criticized by the philosophers who are saying of him,

... "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" . . . "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities," – because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

It seems that this was central.

Whether we recognize it from week to week or not, this is the reason we meet on Sunday – because He is not dead; He is the living Lord.

Applications Resulting from the Resurrection of Christ

Now because of these three fundamental truths, let us get as practical as we possibly can and take a look at what happened then and what should happen now. Let me give at least four applications of the truth that Jesus Christ is alive.

1. Application number one, the resurrection turned death into deliverance.

Look at I Thessalonians 4:14-18. Note that in verse 14, the word "if" could be translated "since".

For if [since] we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

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 not precede those who have fallen asleep.

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

Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The future hope that we have as believers in the resurrection, comes from the fact that Jesus Christ is alive; He has been resurrected from the dead and we believe in this truth.

My aunt and uncle, who live in Minnesota, were telling my parents, this past week, of a friend of theirs who was on an airplane flying into Minneapolis. He was sitting next to a lady who, when dinner was served on the flight, refused hers and sat quietly during the mealtime. After he finished his supper, his curiosity got the best of him. So, he said to the lady, "I noticed you refused your supper."

She replied, "Yes, I did."

He said, "I apologize for asking, if this offends you, but are you fasting?"

She answered, "Yes, I am."

He said, "Well, you must be a Christian then."

She told him, "No, I am a Satanist. I am giving up my meal this hour, to pray that Satan will destroy as many marriages as he possibly can."

How is *that* for dessert? We could discuss this for quite a while, but let me just get on this trail long enough to say – it is something that someone is fasting and praying to their false god that he will destroy marriages, while I wonder how many of us have fasted and prayed that God will preserve marriages. She, in fact, is praying in that which would agree with Satan's nature – he is a destroyer; destruction is in his name. Unlike him, Jesus Christ is One who does not destroy, but puts together; brings to life; keeps together. Jesus Himself, said,

... *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life ..."* (John 14:6)

So in these verses in I Thessalonians, we are basically given, according to Jesus' life, two promises:

- a future rapture (when the church meets Him in the air);
- a future reunion.

If you missed these, let us look again at I Thessalonians 4:17.

Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them . . .

In other words, if the rapture were to occur today, we will be caught up together with them.

Who are the "them"? This verse is referring to those who believed in Christ and have already died; those who are waiting to be reunited with their physical body that will be glorified.

We will, in one split second, all of the sudden, in the clouds, have a wonderful reunion with all those we know who know Christ, who have gone before.

As one elderly friend of mine once said, "The older I get, the more dear friends I have in heaven than on earth."

Some of you may have more children in heaven than on earth. You may have a husband or a wife in heaven. You may have more family members in heaven than on earth. It will be quite a reunion for you.

I was reading, this past week, of Helen Stam, who was born in 1934 to China missionaries John and Betty Stam. At three months old, Helen was hidden in a rice basket as her missionary parents were executed by the Communist regime. She was found by a Chinese pastor and rushed to safety. I think, "What a reunion that will be when she meets her parents in heaven!"

I also read, this past week, of another family who faced tragedy. A man was fishing with his three sons and his father and their boat capsized. All of his sons and his father died. He alone was saved. What a reunion that will be one day.

I read as well, this past week, of a couple who have gone through some things that perhaps, some of you have gone through. They had a two-month-old die of crib death. They had a ten-year-old die of leukemia. They had an eighteen-year-old die in a freak sledding accident. This was all of their children.

I do not think I can really appreciate the thought of a reunion in heaven like these people can.

Why do we believe there will be a reunion in heaven? What hope do we have that this will occur? It is based upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ – that He *is* alive. Because of this, death has been turned into deliverance.

2. Application number two, the resurrection turned farewells into fruitfulness.

Let us read John's words in John 16:5a and 7. Jesus Christ is talking to His disciples.

But now I am going to Him who sent Me . . . But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

Skip to John 16:13a.

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth . . .

Did you catch this? Jesus Christ is saying, in effect, "My presence here is holding someone up, and that is the Holy Spirit. But when I leave and return to the Father, I'll give the go ahead to the Spirit of God. He will come to you and lead you into all truth."

It is an interesting thought that Jesus Christ said, "Farewell," in the physical sense, and the Spirit of God said, "Hello," in the spiritual sense, to the believing church.

Now what does the Spirit of God do? Let me briefly give two things.

- First, the Holy Spirit of God develops spiritual fruit in those who believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 5:22-23 tells us, as you may remember,

. . . the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

In the life of the believer, there are these developing characteristics of the Spirit of God. These marks of the Holy Spirit are so supernatural that they must come from God.

Jesus said, "I'm going to say, 'Farewell,' but as I do, I want you do know that someone else is going to introduce Himself to you – the Spirit of God."

- Secondly, not only does He develop spiritual fruit, the Holy Spirit of God delivers spiritual gifts.

I Corinthians 12:4-5 says,

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.

Skip to I Corinthians 12:11.

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

In other words, because we believe in Jesus Christ and His resurrection, He has gifted us; He has given to each of us a spiritual gift to exercise in the body of Jesus Christ and in His church.

So the Spirit of God, as He comes, develops in our submissive lives, the fruit of the Spirit. He also, delivers to us that which is to be exercised in the church, known as the gifts of the Spirit.

3. Application number three, the resurrection of Jesus Christ turned a skeptic into a servant.

Let us look, for a moment, at some of the men that the Bible tells us were impacted by Jesus' resurrection.

When I say that the resurrection of Jesus Christ turned a skeptic into a servant, I am referring to James. James was one of the brothers of Jesus Christ. In fact, in Matthew 13:55b, we are told the names of Jesus' brothers.

. . . His brothers, James and Joseph [probably Joseph, Jr.] and Simon and Judas

It is interesting that one of Jesus' brothers would be named Judas.

In the next verse, Matthew 13:56a, we are told,
And His sisters . . .

This is referring to the sisters of Jesus in the plural, which means He had at least two.

Now this is a family of at least six kids. Let us think about this for a moment. Why would James and the other brothers and sisters be skeptical? I think it is because they grew up with Jesus from their first day. They knew Him. They had argued with Him – except Jesus was always right.

In my home, if I hear squabbling upstairs, I know what the problem is. I say to my daughter, "Candace, come down here now."

In Jesus' home, if there was a little bit of squabbling in the room, Mary never said, "Jesus, cut that out."

Can you imagine having a brother who was always right? Mary would always say, "James, Judas, Simon, cut it out."

As they grew from young boyhood, I would imagine that the sibling rivalry increased. Probably, in the hearts of Jesus' brothers and sisters, skepticism developed. James was most likely the leader.

I can understand sibling rivalry because of my own kids, and you probably can too. My sons, who are five, compete about everything. It is always – who can run the fastest; who can color the neatest; who can eat the fastest. Every meal in our home is ended with the victorious words of some kid saying, "I won!" I wish they would compete at night to see who could go to sleep the fastest, but that is not part of the game!

I have a lot of patience with this because I grew up with three brothers in my family. Now, my older brother is a pastor, I am a pastor, one of my younger brothers is a music director for a church, and my youngest brother is working on an MBA – a real smart whip. However, the four of us, even today, when we go home and get together, immediately start competing. We head out to the basketball goal in the driveway, if it is not snowing, and will typically play three or four games of "Horse".

Horse, by the way, is a game in which one person takes a shot at the basket from any given place and, if they make it, the next person in line has to stand where they stood and make it. If they miss, they get a letter of the word "horse," starting with the letter "h". Eventually, they miss enough shots to spell "horse," and they are out of the game.

My brothers and I get out there and act like kids – heckling each other, trying to distract each other, calling each other funny names. Now if I play you in a game of horse, I will be pastoral; I will be polite. When you make a long shot that I then have to make, I will say, "Boy, that's terrific," but I will tell you that in my gut, I am saying, "What a lucky shot! He couldn't do that again in a million years."

James is a man who has been raised in this home with a boy who was always perfect. I would imagine that a little jealousy arose and conflicts occurred.

Now, Jesus is calling His disciples about Him and claiming to be God. James and his brothers and

sisters say, "That's it!" In fact, in Mark 3:21, we are told that after Jesus called His disciples about Him, His brothers and sisters came to,

. . . take custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His senses."

This is Jesus' family. He has a family of skeptics.

Turn to the book of John again and look at John 7:2-4. Notice the cynicism in their voices.

Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near. Therefore His [Jesus'] brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world."

Now note John 7:5. Here it is.

For not even His brothers were believing in Him.

Now we know something happened because James wrote an epistle. James was also the leader in the Jerusalem church. He had been an unbelieving skeptic, so let us read what happened. In I Corinthians 15:4-7a, Paul is talking about the gospel and writes,

and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, . . . then He appeared to James . . .

I wish I could have seen this. These are two brothers, or half-brothers. One is an unbelieving skeptic, due to jealousy and conflict perhaps, saying, "No, my brother can't be God. I know Him."

Then, the resurrected Lord comes and makes a special appearance just to James.

This was the turning point because James saw that, in fact, the One with whom he was constantly competing and could never seem to beat, was, in fact, God in the flesh. He then, worshiped Him.

James' own epistle begins with the words,

James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ . . . (James 1:1)

What a change! What brought it about? The resurrected Lord.

4. Application number four, the resurrection turned cowards into crusaders.

This is one of my favorite thoughts on the resurrection. I am convinced that Jesus Christ did not continue to prepare His disciples thoroughly after His death and resurrection or the church would have begun and ended with the empty tomb.

Take a look at the disciples – they are in the upper room. One of them has already taken his life. Ten are fearfully huddled in hiding. The most vocal voice of them all is silenced in shame. One of the eleven, who is still living, is not even meeting with the others. He is disillusioned and doubting. Yet, Jesus Christ appears to this crew.

Jesus steps in on this scene and says His first word, “chairo”; that is, “rejoice, we have conquered.” Then these doubting, fearful disciples begin their lives of impassioned service.

What made the difference? He could have been a fake. In fact, before the time of Christ, there were seven fake Messiahs who announced that they were God in the flesh. All of them had died or been exiled, and their disciples had disbanded. This scene could have not even happened.

What made the difference? Are the disciples propounding a fake? Did they get together in the upper room and say, “Look, fellows, we know He’s really dead and it’s all over, but why don’t we just keep the fraud going? Why don’t we give our lives to this?”

No. The disciples saw Jesus alive. This scene was not fake – it was real.

It is interesting that there are a dozen Mona Lisa paintings around, and all of them are signed by Leonardo da Vinci. Eleven of them are fakes, but every owner would say, “I have the real thing.” None of these owners, I am sure, would try to prove that their painting is the genuine item.

A couple of years ago, my wife and I went to one of our favorite spots – or it was until that particular trip – Williamsburg. Let me tell you the reason it has moved from number one on our list to somewhere down around number three hundred.

We began walking through, after buying our book of coupons. The coupon book, by the way, is something new. When I was a kid, we would go to Williamsburg almost every other summer. At that time, you could buy, for a buck, a trip on a bus and the bus would drop you off right in the restored area

of Williamsburg. You could then, go through everything. Now you have to buy an expensive book of coupons and you can only go through a few places. You should go because it is a great place to visit, but the price is different.

We were walking through Williamsburg and came to John Adam’s house. We looked in our coupon book and indeed, we had a coupon for John Adam’s house. Now I am being cynical about the coupons, but I love history and relics and Marsha does too. So, we began walking through John Adam’s house and came to the parlor with all the Victorian furniture that has worn spots and with all the old rugs and all the stuff. I asked the tour guide, in a reverential, hushed voice, “How much of this really belonged to John Adams?”

She looked at me like I was a real tourist, and as she rolled her eyes, said, “None of it.”

I thought, “None of it! And I spent thirty bucks for this coupon book!”

I pressed the question and ask the guide, “How much of the stuff in this house dates back to the 1700s?”

She said, “Oh, do you see the wall over there on the other side of the parlor?”

I said, “Oh, yes.”

She said, “Well, do you see that grouping there of the painting and the candle sconces?”

I said, “Oh, that?”

She said, “No. Do you see that table there.”

I said, “Yes.”

She said, “Not that, but do you see the candle on the table? The candle holder is the only thing in the house that dates back to that time.”

I did not know whether to cry or to punch her! I would never work in Williamsburg. I could not even take people through it on tours. It is not the real thing.

Now do you think someone is going to die for a fake? Do you think someone is going to give their life for imitation stuff?

No. The disciples had seen the genuine thing. Their Lord had risen.

Do you want to know what happened to the disciples after they had launched into their life-threatening ministries?

- Matthew was slain with a sword in Ethiopia.

- Mark died after being dragged through the streets of Alexandria.
- Luke was hanged from an olive tree in Greece.
- Peter was crucified upside-down in Rome.
- James was thrown from the temple wall, then beaten to death with clubs.
- Bartholomew endured the torture of being skinned, or flayed, alive, before dying.
- Andrew was bound to an x-shaped cross, from which he slowly died.
- Thomas had spears run through his body.
- Jude was shot to death with arrows.
- Matthias was stoned and then, beheaded.
- Barnabas was stoned to death in Salamis.

They had seen with their eyes, and their hearts had become aflame with the truth that Jesus Christ is alive.

Conclusion

In my reading, I came across a story that occurred many years ago in Russia, during the season of Easter. Before the Communist regime took a throat-like clutch on Christianity, the Christians greeted each other during Easter, not with the words, “How are you,” and “I am fine,” but with, “Christ is risen,” and the response, “Christ is risen indeed.” So it went for years, until the Communist regime began to strangle the church and force it underground. When this occurred, the sunrise Easter services that they had had in the open, were replaced with Communist sunrise rallies that all of the people were compelled to attend.

During one of these sunrise rallies, according to the account that I read, more than 10,000 people were in the town square listening to the propaganda of the Communists. After the leader finished on that Easter morning, he asked the audience if anyone had anything they wished to say. No one moved for a long period of time, until finally, a young man made his way out of the crowd and walked up and took the stairs to the platform. He approached the microphone and, as he did, the leader hissed at him, “Speak only the truth.”

As the crowd watched and heard, the commander ordered his soldiers to raise their rifles and said, “If he speaks anything but the truth, he’ll die.”

The young man stepped up to the microphone, and with his head down, paused for a long period of time.

Then, he took a deep, courageous breath and shouted, “Christ is risen.”

The rifles exploded into action and his body fell to the stage floor. However, the sound that was louder than all of the rifles; louder than all of the propaganda, was the sound of the voices of nearly 10,000 people shouting in return, “Christ is risen indeed.”

What kind of power and motivation is this? It is the power and motivation that comes when we, like they, believe in our hearts, by faith, that Jesus Christ is alive; when the resurrection becomes the central theme of:

- our faith;
- our gospel;
- our doctrine.

It is this kind of belief that turns:

- our death and despair into deliverance;
- our farewell to the risen Lord in bodily appearance into spiritual power and fruitfulness through the Spirit of God in His spiritual appearance;
- us as skeptics, though our hearts may be hardened, into bond-servants of Jesus Christ;
- us as cowards, into a courageous disciples.

How does this happen? It happens because we, like they, say, “Christ is risen indeed.”