

Understanding the Gospel – Part II

What would our world be like if the resurrection were not true?

Top Ten Survey Results:

1. If Jesus Christ had remained buried in the grave then the story of His life and death would have remained buried with Him. Thus no need for the Great Commission or the New Testament.
2. Death would still be our final enemy and we would have no hope. Our preaching about the resurrection would be in vain and foolish.
3. The founding of America probably would have been completely different as it probably would not have been to obtain religious freedom but for personal or patriotic gain.
4. The “good Samaritan” principles, philanthropic activities, or basic good will (i.e. hospitals and orphanages) of people would have no real basis, drive or motivation.
5. It is highly probable that women would not have many of the freedoms that they do today. There would probably be a lack of basic human rights, and slavery of any “weaker class” might still exist.
6. Our celebration of holidays would be dramatically different, much of our music, art, literature, would look so much different without the hope that the resurrection brings!
7. Without the influence of the church in history the political, religious, and social makeup of our world would be so different. Islam potentially would have gone unchecked in the Middle Ages.
8. Although our present world may seem chaotic at times.....imagine the chaos of today; if as far back as the Roman Empire that many had not embraced Christ and lived for Him?
9. Since the Jews have faced potential extinction on so many occasions; what would have held various tyrants from eliminating them altogether....and for that matter any other unwanted race?
10. “If no resurrection – then no glorious expectation that we would spend eternity with Jesus who rose from the grave. There would be no incentive to live a holy life and use Jesus as our perfect example.” As a result each man would be his own island doing as he/she seemed fit to do. If you remove the hope of the resurrection then the moral framework of our society would be left to the best man can muster on his own, all the while greed and personal gain would continue to chip away at any good that we can produce.

The Significance of the Resurrection:

1. What conclusions can we draw from the Scriptures & historical data?
 - The teaching on the resurrection was the dividing line between the Jewish leaders and the Apostles.
 - 1) In response to the claims of Peter that Jesus raised from the dead (Acts 5:30-32), the great Jewish teacher **Gamaliel** told the Sanhedrin; “I say to you stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God you will not be able to overthrow them; or you may even be found fighting against God” (Acts 5:38-39)
 - 2) This doctrine/belief was the central component of the Apostles teaching/preaching throughout the New Testament. (Acts 2:24, 32-33, 3:15, 4:10, 5:30-32, 10:40-43, 13:30-34, 17:31, I Peter 1:21-23, I Corinthians 15, Philippians 3:20-21)
 - Even the greatest of skeptics since the time of the Apostles, conclude that if the resurrection actually took place then Christianity must be what it claims to be; a direct revelation from God.
2. What conclusions can we draw from our survey?
 - If the resurrection of Jesus Christ were not true then our world would be dramatically different:
 - 1) Our message would be without hope according to Paul (I Corinthians 15:14, 17-18)
 - 2) All claims by Christ and subsequently by His followers (the disciples) would be erroneous and unreliable. (Matthew 12:39-40, John 2:18-22, Matthew 26:63-64)

- 3) **William Evans writes**; “If the resurrection of Christ can be successfully denied, if it can be proven to be absolutely untrue, then the whole fabric of the Gospel falls to pieces, the whole structure of the Christian religion is shaken at its foundation, and the very arch of Christianity crumbles into dust. Then it has wrought only imaginary changes, deluded its most faithful adherents, deceived and disappointed the hopes of its most devoted disciples, and the finest moral achievements that adorn the pages of the history of the Christian church have been based upon a falsehood” (**William Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible* page 85**)

- If the resurrection were not true then there would be no basis or foundation for truth.
 - 1) If the resurrection were false then the death of Christ was in vain and it would make their (the Apostles) preaching completely erroneous according to Paul (I Corinthians 15).
 - 2) If the death of Christ was in vain then what purpose would His birth have served?
 - 3) All three events; the birth, death and resurrection of Christ are essential – prove one to be false and they all crumble together!
 - 4) If the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ are untrue then the very words of the Old Testament would be in jeopardy of being proven false.
 - 5) If the Old Testament or the New Testament were proven to be unreliable and false then what would be our basis for morality?

Understanding the Scriptural Definition of the Resurrection:

1. We have already established that in order for the resurrection to have happened, Jesus would have had to have died.
 - There are theories that make assertions that Jesus merely appeared to be dead (called the swoon theory). Those who hold this position claim that when He was taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb, He was revived from the cool air and simply walked out of the tomb on His own free will. There are obvious holes in this theory and we would consider this teaching by the Gnostics to be a heretical teaching. (John 19:33-37, Matthew 27:57-58, Mark 15:44-45, Mark 16:1, Revelation 1:18)
 - As we stated before all three significant events (the birth, death and resurrection) are so intricately connected that to prove one wrong will prove them all to be wrong. There isn't even room for a "partial death" such as a "swooning" so let's understand that such attempts at proving Jesus did not actually die are weak at best! They serve to be a mere distraction from the truth.
2. What evidence do we have for the resurrection of Jesus Christ?
 - An _____ tomb for starters (Matthew 28:1-8, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-12, John 20:1-20)
 - 1) This was first attested by the women who went to visit the tomb where Jesus had been laid and found that He was not there.
 - 2) The empty tomb was also attested by the angel who reminded the women that this is precisely what Jesus said would happen. (Matthew 16:21, 17:23, 20:19)
 - 3) It was also attested by the other disciples (the very least of which were Peter & John – see John 20:1-20, Luke 24:1-12)

- 4) The empty tomb was attested by the Roman guards although they were later bribed to say that Jesus' disciples came and stole the body.....more on that later.
- 5) How do we answer the contradiction between what the soldiers claimed (Matthew 28:11-15) to what the angels declared, and the women and disciples testified to?

- The _____ of over 500 witnesses that the same Jesus who was dead is now alive (I Corinthians 15:3-9). See chart from **The Bible Knowledge Commentary Volume 2 page 91** - below:

(BKC [NT] p. 91)	
FORTY DAYS - from Resurrection to Ascension	
SUNDAY MORNING	
1.	An angel rolled away the stone from Jesus' tomb before sunrise (Matt. 28:2-4).
2.	Women who followed Jesus visited Jesus' tomb and discovered Him missing (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1-4; Luke 24:1-3; John 20:1).
3.	Mary Magdalene left to tell Peter and John (John 20:1-2).
4.	The other women, remaining at the tomb, saw two angels who told them about the Resurrection (Matt. 28:5-7; Mark 16:5-7; Luke 24:4-8).
5.	Peter and John visited Jesus' tomb (Luke 24:12; John 20:3-10).
6.	Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb and Jesus appeared to her alone in the garden (Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18): <i>His first appearance.</i>
7.	Jesus appeared to the other women (Mary, mother of James, Salome, and Joanna) (Matt. 28:8-10): <i>His second appearance.</i>
8.	Those who guarded Jesus' tomb reported to the religious rulers how the angel rolled away the stone. They were then bribed (Matt. 28:11-15).
9.	Jesus appeared to Peter (1 Cor. 15:5): <i>His third appearance.</i>
SUNDAY AFTERNOON	
10.	Jesus appeared to two men on the road to Emmaus (Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-32): <i>His fourth appearance.</i>
SUNDAY EVENING	
11.	The two disciples from Emmaus told others they saw Jesus (Luke 24:33-35).
12.	Jesus appeared to 10 apostles, with Thomas absent, in the Upper Room (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25): <i>His fifth appearance.</i>
THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY	
13.	Jesus appeared to the 11 Apostles, including Thomas, and Thomas believed (John 20:26-28): <i>His sixth appearance.</i>
THE FOLLOWING 32 DAYS	
14.	Jesus appeared to seven disciples by the Sea of Galilee and performed a miracle of fish (John 21:1-14): <i>His seventh appearance.</i>
15.	Jesus appeared to 500 (including the Eleven) at a mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18; 1 Cor. 15:6): <i>His eighth appearance.</i>
16.	Jesus appeared to His half-brother James (1 Cor. 15:7): <i>His ninth appearance.</i>
17.	At Jerusalem Jesus appeared again to His disciples (Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:3-8): <i>His tenth appearance.</i>
18.	On the Mount of Olives Jesus ascended into heaven while the disciples watched (Mark 16:19-20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-12).

- The testimony of Paul (I Corinthians 15:1-19, Romans 8:11, Acts 9:1-9)
- The testimony of Jesus Christ Himself (Revelation 1:17-18, John 20:20-29)
- The continual declaration and testimony of the apostles during the “Apostolic Period” even if it meant punishment and or death. (Acts 2:22-24, 32-33, 3:11-15, 4:1-2, 10-12, 33, 5:30-32, 42, 7:52-53, I Peter 1:3, 21, 3:21-22)
- The lack of credible early proof that Jesus’ body was actually stolen as the guards claimed. No where is the Biblical record or early historical records do we find a credible debate against the words proclaimed by the apostles that Jesus was raised from the dead. Had Jesus’ body been found; it was in those early days that the claims of Christ and the apostles should have been disputed. In addition to that; proof should have been provided. The lack of such dispute or proof against the declaration from a band of fisherman that Jesus was raised from the dead; especially from the most educated of Judaism seems rather unusual....unless they had none!
- Another significant proof; is over two thousand years of church history in which these same truths of the resurrection were continually preached, defended, and died for.
- Finally, the gathering together of present day believers is testimony that the resurrection is true for we continue to proclaim it as such and to this day no one has yet to produce the dead body of our Lord for He is risen and risen indeed!

3. Questions/comments:

What was the nature of the resurrection body of Christ?

1. Jesus' body was a real body and not a _____ or as my son likes to say His body was not like _____ the friendly ghost!
 - Luke's account describes His body with flesh and bones (Luke 24:36-43)
 - The Apostle John tell us that Thomas touched Jesus' flesh (John 20:20-29)
 - There was evidence of the physical wounds from the crucifixion (John 20:24-29)
2. The resurrected body of Jesus was **more** than just a mere natural body:
 - There was a unique relationship to the celestial (heavenly or supra-terrestrial) realm. (John 20:17 Acts 1:1-11)
 - He could pass through doors that were shut (John 20:19, 26)
 - His body was a physical body without the limitations found on this side of heaven.
 - 1) He was more physical not less physical
 - 2) "In the risen life the spiritual controls the material rather than as here the material the spiritual" (**William Evans; The Great Doctrines of the Bible – page 89**)
3. His body was immortal for it could not die again (Romans 6:9-10, Revelation 1:18)
4. Some day our bodies will undergo a transformation where the corruptible will put on incorruption and the mortal will take on immortality. This is the glorious hope to those who believe in Christ! (I Corinthians 15:50-58)

So What! – The Results of the Resurrection:

(Quotations taken from William Evans Book entitled; The Great Doctrines of the Bible pages 94-96)

1. “As to Jesus Christ Himself”
 - “He was not made the Son of God by being resurrected but He was declared to be the Son of God by it.” (Romans 1:4, Acts 10:34-42)
 - “Had Christ remained in the grave as other men had done, there would have been no grounds to impose faith in Him. The empty tomb testifies to the deity of Christ”
 - If Jesus had not risen from the dead then His very words would have been untrustworthy and un-authoritative; for He openly declared that He would rise from the dead. (Matthew 12:38-42, John 2:13-22, Matthew 28:18-20)
2. “As to the believer in Jesus Christ”
 - “An assurance of being made _____ with God” (Romans 4:25, 5:1-21)
 - “An assurance that we have a High Priest (Jesus Christ) _____ on our behalf.” (Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25)
 - “An assurance that we have everything we need for _____ and _____.” (Ephesians 1:19-22)
 - “An assurance of our own _____ and _____” (I Thessalonians 4:14, II Corinthians 4:14, John 14:19)
3. “As to the world”
 - “The certainty of a _____” (I Corinthians 15:22, Revelation 20:11-15)
 - The certainty of a _____ day (Acts 17:31, Hebrews 9:27)

Concluding Thoughts:

1. The story does not end at the resurrection for Jesus ascended to the “Right Hand of the Father” and He remains there as our advocate (High Priest) and intercessor. (Acts 1:9-11, 7:56, Rom. 8:34, Heb. 7:25, Rev. 5)
2. It doesn’t even end there for we are told that a day is coming when this same Jesus will return in the same manner that He left. (Acts 1:9-11)
3. Jesus told His disciples that although He was leaving them; He would return for them (John 14:1-3).
4. During this period of “anticipation” we continue to await His return, and are not left comfortless for the Holy Spirit provides us with everything that we need to endure in a world that despises our cause. (John 14:12-31)
5. The day is coming though; when that which restrains the evil one will be removed (II Thess. 2:3, 6-7), then the man of lawlessness, the imposter who sets himself up as god (the antichrist); will attempt to deceive the world into believing that he is their savior and will delude people into following him. (II Thess. 2:1-17, Dan. 7:7-8, 11-12, 15-28, Rev. 13:1-18)
6. This will all conclude with the glorious return of Christ (Revelation 19:11-21), then Satan will be bound for 1000 years (Revelation 20:1-3), and Christ will reign during those 1000 years. (Revelation 20:4-6).
7. After this Satan will be released for a season in which he makes an attempt to overthrow the King (Jesus Christ) and His kingdom, but he and his evil forces will fail and then suffer the final judgment of eternal damnation in hell for which it was created. (Revelation 20:7-10, Matthew 25:41)
8. Then all of mankind will be judged and those not found written in the Book of Life will also be sentenced to eternal separation from God (the second death) in the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15)
9. This will finally culminate in a New Heaven and a New Earth as described for us in Revelation 21-22.