

28. Resurrection, the core message of the Gospel

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Most people find some parts of the Gospel message a bitter pill to swallow, a part of which they sneer their rejections, ever keeping the Good News of Jesus Christ at arm's length. The ancient Greeks were no exception. Because of their pride in their advanced cultural intellects, they found it difficult to embrace the Resurrection of Christ.

Although the Christians at the ancient Corinth had accepted the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus, these people still denied the resurrection of their own bodies. So, in this chapter 15, the apostle Paul builds his case for the resurrection of the body a simple, yet persuasive argument: Because Christ has risen from the dead and promised that believers will also be raised, we must either accept our resurrection, too, or reject Christ's as well.

Paul spends the first 11 verses of this chapter building the foundation for his argument – validating the Lord's Resurrection.

A. THE CORE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 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,

The heartbeat of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the resurrection theology. V1 is showing us how it was delivered to the unbelievers in Corinth.

The Gospel is only of benefit, if it is received, and if one will stand in it which means believing it. There's always a vehicle of knowledge – whether a person, the Bible, or other literature – always a willing recipient, and always the same result, someone standing for the first time on the solid rock of God's truth. But this process isn't restricted to the pulpit.

In fact, pulpit preaching sometimes can make it difficult for the heart of a sinner to accept the truth. Informally sharing the Gospel can reach people that preaching never could. You don't need a pulpit. It can be done across the kitchen table, over the back fence, from one desk to another – wherever. All it takes for salvation to be secured is a willing believer to speak about the Gospel, a ready unbelieving recipient to hear, and a right response to the truth.

Salvation from sin isn't God's only goal for us. He is also concerned that we be saved from ourselves – stubborn, strong self-will that constantly entangles our new born-again spirits. We see that Paul has this second objective in mind through his choice of words in v2.

Notice that he doesn't say "were saved," which would indicate the one-time, ever-secure acceptance of salvation. Rather, he says, "are saved," which means that this kind of salvation is an ongoing process. Also, the "Word" Paul preached to them is

a figure of speech to the daily denying of self, taking up your cross and following the Lord. Paul is saying that if our belief is only surface, if no signs of victory over sin that are growing from the soil of our lives, we have believed in vain.

In v3 and 4, Paul summarizes the entire NT. This is the core message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. However, we must not neglect to notice how the Scriptures were explained here in v3 and 4.

“According to the Scriptures” – according to which portion of the Scriptures? There are so many Scriptural references about Jesus’ death and resurrection in the OT – Psalm 22:15, Psalm 16:9-11, Psalm 68:18, Psalm 110:1, and Isaiah 53:10.

Here are the 2 most important points of the Gospel:

1) Christ died for our sins

The sin Christ died for was our selfish independence, our rejection of His way of righteousness and holiness that we need to be saved.

Isaiah 53:5-6 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

2) Christ rose from the dead

Receiving salvation through Jesus Christ is simply believing that Jesus died for all of our sins and conquered the death and rose again from the grave. His tomb is empty.

Remember, the OT prophesied what was going to happen in the NT, the NT fulfilled what was prophesied. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was not an accident, nor was it “Plan B” that God the Father had to scramble to save mankind like some false teachers insist.

B. THE APPEARANCES OF CHRIST

1 Corinthians 15:5-8 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.

No one saw the actual resurrection of Jesus. No one was present in the tomb with Him when His body transformed into a resurrection body. Though no one saw the actual resurrection of Jesus, many people saw the resurrected Jesus. Paul now calls forth these witnesses to the resurrection, to establish beyond all controversy that Jesus was raised from the dead in a resurrected body.

You may have heard a song: “You ask me how I know He lives; He lives, He lives inside my heart.” But that is not the best way to prove that Jesus lives. The unbelievers came up with 3 theories to solve the missing body of Jesus. Of course, what they insist on falls like a house of cards.

Here are those 3 theories:

1) The stolen body theory

Matthew 28:12-15 A meeting of all the religious leaders was called, and they decided to bribe the soldiers. They told the soldiers, “You must say, ‘Jesus’ disciples came during the night while we were sleeping, and they stole

his body." Their story spread widely among the Jews, and they still tell it today.

The guards of Christ's tomb first told this lie after He rose from the dead. The Scripture tells us that the religious leaders bribed the soldiers and commanded them to say, "*Jesus' disciples came during the night while we were sleeping, and they stole his body*". The Scripture tells us even the disciples thought the report of the women who saw the Risen Savior "*sounded like nonsense, so they didn't believe it*" according to Luke 24:11. Instead of waiting with great anticipation for the Risen Christ, the disciples initially did not believe it.

It is also unlikely that Christ's enemies would have stolen His body. They yearned for no more Jesus movement. The religious leaders took extreme measures to protect Christ's body in the grave and prove that the resurrection was a lie. So stealing Christ's body would have accomplished everything they were against. Even if they had stolen the body, they undoubtedly would have produced it once that brand new group of believers began to win people to Christ. But Jesus' enemies never produced His body, because they did not have Christ's body to produce.

2) The swoon theory

John 19:33–35 But when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was dead already, so they didn't break his legs. One of the soldiers, however, pierced his side with a spear, and blood and water flowed out. This report is from an eyewitness giving an accurate account; it is presented so that you also can believe.

The swoon theory is the second of satan's oldest lies concerning the Resurrection of Jesus. This theory proposes that Jesus did not rise from the dead, because He never really died. Instead, Jesus went into a deep coma or "swoon" from the severe pain and trauma of the Crucifixion. Then, in the cool atmosphere of the tomb, Christ revived, somehow escaped the strips of clothes that were wrapped tightly around Him, and then appeared to His disciples.

The swoon theory cannot fly in the face of the facts. You see, the Roman guards were experts in execution and they would be put to death if they allowed a condemned man, like Christ, to escape death. The guards were certain Jesus was dead, because when they thrust a spear into His side, it brought forth blood, dark red corpuscles, and water, clear serum. This was their final proof of His death, because this only occurs when the heart stops beating.

A humorous letter to the editor of a Christian magazine accurately evaluated the "Swoon Theory" well:

Dear Editor: Our preacher said, on Easter, that Jesus just swooned on the cross and that the disciples nursed Him back to health. What do you think?

Sincerely, Bewildered

Dear Bewildered: Beat your preacher with a cat-of-nine-tails with 39 heavy lashes, nail him to a cross; hang him in the sun for 6 hours; run a spear through his heart; embalm him; put him in an airless tomb for 50 hours and see what happens.

Sincerely, Editor

According to this Swoon theory, Jesus woke up and all by Himself rolled away the one thousand pound stone with His pierced hands from the inside where there was nothing to get hold of. Then, with His beaten up body, He jumped on a squad of trained professional Roman soldiers who had spears and swords. He knocked them

all out and ran away with His pierced feet. If you believe the 'Swoon Theory', you have more faith than I do.

There is a perfect theme music to go with this far fetch 'Swoon' theory.

Amazingly enough, people still believe in this theory. Not because it's believable; Not because it's logical, but because it's something they'd rather believe than the truth of God. The truth of the matter is that Jesus Christ has risen!

3) The mass hallucination theory

1 Corinthians 15:5-6 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.

Another of Satan's lies about the Resurrection of Jesus is the mass hallucination theory. This theory proposes that everyone who claimed to see the Risen Lord was actually hallucinating out of an earnest desire to see Him alive again.

The fact of the matter is that hallucinations typically can occur with people who, in one way or another, are expecting them. But biblical evidence reveals that when Jesus was crucified, His disciples were devastated and destroyed. Their faith was to a large degree shattered. They had absolutely no hopes of ever seeing Jesus alive again.

Once more, hallucinations, once started, are continual. But the disciples only saw Jesus for a very limited time. Then they ceased to see Him again.

The Scripture also records that Jesus not only appeared to the disciples on a number of occasions, but also that He appeared to more than 500 people at one time. That's pretty unbelievable for 500 people to hallucinate the same thing at the same place at the same time. If this evidence against the Resurrection were ever brought forth in a court of law, it certainly would not hold water. Even the freshman of a law school can defeat their lies.

Satan's lies about the Resurrection never hold up because Jesus is alive. He fulfilled the Scriptures by rising again, conquering sin and death. He appeared over and over again to a multitude of eyewitnesses. And each appearance of Christ is a tender demonstration of Him meeting the needs and hurts of His children.

The fact of the matter is that Christ's tomb was empty because He rose again from the dead. Nothing, not Satan or the lies of this world can ever change the truth that Christ is risen.

C. SIGNS OF RESURRECTION LIFE

1 Corinthians 15:9-11 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 11 Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

I believe that this is a very tender moment of the aging apostle Paul who openly admitted his unworthiness, refused to compete with his peers, and recognized his weaknesses.

He attributed everything valuable in his life to God's grace. Though he had accomplished much for the Lord, his humility is genuine. Because he remembers where the strength is coming from. And the best part of this comment from Paul is that he didn't want human credits, and reminding us about giving glory to God.

D. THE TRUTH TO REMEMBER

- 1) The resurrection of Christ was prophesied from the beginning of the creation.
- 2) The death of Jesus on the cross was for our sins, through His resurrection born-again Christians no longer have to face eternal death.
- 3) The Lord Jesus has promised not only to give us eternal life, but also to give us abundant life - DAILY - as we soften our hearts, surrender our wills, and obey Him.