

29. What if there were no resurrection?

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I am sure that many of us have seen this image whether it was from TV or in real life of our loved ones. With that awful high pitching “Beep” sound, the EKG heart monitor line that used to show the heart movements goes flat. Then, followed by someone saying, “He’s dead.” How do you feel? And your mind races frantically every direction in a frozen fog.

Death gets everyone’s attention. Because we all know that death is the final chapter of this earthly life, we’ve all felt its sting. But for those of us who believe in Christ, there is a healing agent. A sweet healing agent – the RESURRECTION through Jesus Christ. The resurrection is all we have to cling to when death has stripped a loved one from our arms. Without it, our lives would have no hope or meaning, because we, too, someday have to face our own death.

I’ve done many funeral ceremonies in the last 18 years. I’ve even sat next to many grieving people who just lost their loved ones. But whenever I do funeral ceremonies of the born-again believers of Jesus Christ, I cannot suppress that irremovable joy and hope in my heart, because I know that I will see them again in heaven. None of their physical or emotional affiliations would give me that assurance, except one thing – because their Savior Jesus Christ has conquered death, the last enemy, and resurrected, so the spirits of the born-again believers who passed away are in heaven right now and their physical bodies will be resurrected in the future, as we will study this morning.

A. WHAT IF THE RESURRECTION IS FALSE?

1 Corinthians 15:12-19 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 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.

The Corinthians had rejected the hope of the resurrection. They had bought into the common Greek philosophy that the body was perishable, even contaminated by man’s sin. Therefore, although they accepted the Lord’s Resurrection, they rejected the idea of the resurrection of their own bodies.

Why was the apostle Paul so adamant about carefully explaining and proving the resurrection of Jesus? It was not that these Corinthian Christians were not believing the Savior’s resurrection. As a matter of fact, they did as we learned in v11 last week. Because of their Greek philosophical background that drenched in their mind, they thought that their own resurrection could happen in the state of impure spirit.

We need to clarify very important points here before we proceed further:

1) When a born-again believer dies, his spirit departs this earth immediately to heaven to be with our Savior and Lord Jesus, no purgatory.

As a matter of fact, there is no mention of purgatory in the Bible at all. It is nothing more than a fancy invention of catholicism. In other words, it is unbiblical.

2 Corinthians 5:8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

2) Until the rapture happens, all the born-again Christians' dead physical bodies will remain on earth. But at the moment of the rapture, the Lord our God will be able to raise them up from whatever the situations they were in.

Some Christians have doubts that God won't be able to do it because it was too long ago or that person was cremated. Seriously? Are they telling me that the God who created heaven and earth and everything in between from nothing cannot put back together His followers' bodies? To God, resurrecting dead bodies are a cake walk.

3) I know you have this mind-boggling question about the glorified bodies that we are going to have: Do we still need to diet and exercise to keep ourselves in shape in heaven? Totally negative. Eat all your heart desires, there is no calorie in heaven. We will have the glorified body like our Lord Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:52-53 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Many unbelievers think that Christianity requires you to leave your mind and logic at the door before you start to believe in Jesus blindly. Yes, there is a portion where we have to believe without seeing. That's what we call "faith." If you can see whatever we are supposed to believe, it is NOT faith, rather evidence.

I just love the way the apostle Paul so logically explains away the link between Jesus' resurrection and our own resurrection:

- If there is no principle of resurrection, then Jesus did not rise from the dead.
- If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then death has power over Him and defeated Him.
- If death has power over Jesus, He is not God.
- If Jesus is not God, He cannot offer a complete sacrifice for our sins.
- If Jesus cannot offer a complete sacrifice for our sins, our sins are not completely paid for before God.
- If our sins are not completely paid for before God, then we are still in our sins.
- Therefore, if Jesus is not risen, He is unable to save any of mankind.

Remember that resurrection is not merely life after death; it is the continuation of life after death in glorified bodies, which are our present bodies in a glorified state.

B. THE POWER OF RESURRECTION

Romans 6:8-9 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is among the most important of all biblical truths. It is foundational. It is the bedrock. Many other aspects of the Christian faith depend and rest on the Resurrection.

Let me share with you just three essential Christian truths that depend on the Resurrection:

1) Life beyond the grave depends on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:21-22 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

Jesus' victory over death promises us that we, too, will overcome death.

2) God's future judgment of the world rests upon the Resurrection.

Acts 17:31 He [God] has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man [Christ] whom He has ordained. He [God] has given assurance of this to all by raising Him [Christ] from the dead.

This promise reminds us that God will one day right every wrong.

3) The resurrection of Christ gives us power to live the Christian life.

Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

The Resurrection is no peripheral issue. It provides power to Christianity, freedom from sin, and joy to followers of Christ.

C. JESUS' RESURRECTION

1 Corinthians 15:20-22 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

Many people are scared to death about death, literally. They are so scared that even mentioning of death throws chills on their spines. It is understandable, because death still remains in unknown future and no matter what kind of position or social status you are in, you have to face it someday. To unbelievers, death is the final chapter. There is no more goal, no more hope, and no more escape.

The firstfruits were a sign of the harvest to come. And the Resurrection of Jesus was that sign of the resurrection of all believers which was to come. The Greek word for "firstfruits" is "*aparche*." In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT, this word is used for the offering of firstfruits and in secular usage the word was used for an entrance fee.

Let's go back to v21. Wherever the Scriptures speak about sin, they also speak about death. The two are inseparable. Whoever experiences one will experience the other. But in the Lord's case, whoever triumphs one, triumphs over the other. Adam brought sin and death into the world, but Christ brought resurrection and life. Like a man who took the firstfruits to the temple for his offering, Jesus was resurrected and presented to the Father as a sign of the harvest to come – the resurrection of the believers.

D. OUR OWN RESURRECTION

1 Corinthians 15:23-28 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. 24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. 27 For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. 28

Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

Beginning with v23, the emphasis shifts from the past to the future – from Christ's Resurrection to ours. Without giving a specific time frame, Paul flashes three sequential scenes across the screen of the future:

1) Christ's coming and the believers' resurrection – v23-24

Jesus is the firstborn from the dead according to Colossians 1:18 and Revelation 1:5, those who have died believing in Him will be raised next. Firstfruits first, then the harvest. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 describes this miraculous event we know as the Rapture.

Right now, the first resurrection, Revelation 20:4-6, is in a process since Jesus Christ's own resurrection in AD 30. He is the firstfruit. And it continues as each child of God, living and believing in Jesus Christ, as they fall asleep in Christ, the first resurrection continues. It will be completed when all of the martyred believers from the tribulation period have been fulfilled and entered the heavenly realm. That will complete the first resurrection.

The second resurrection of the unbelievers of the entire mankind will not take place until the end of the thousand year Millennial reign of Jesus Christ at the Great White Throne Judgment of God according to Revelation 20:7-9. This is the second resurrection.

Revelation 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

Before we go any further, let's make one thing very clear. There is no reincarnation like the New Age people, Christian Scientists, Hindu, Buddhists, and many other cults would like to believe. We die once and stand before the presence of God. You don't come back as another human being or animal or whatever they insist. There is a Southern Swedish phrase for that, "Are you crazy?"

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.

2) The King's kingdom and His enemies' abolition – v25-27

When is Jesus going to destroy the last enemy, death? According to the Word of God, Revelation 20:14, there will be no deaths after the unbelievers who follow the devil cast into the lake of fire. After this, there will be no more death, no more tears, no more agony, and no more fear.

3) The Son's subjection and the Father's acceptance – v28-29

Those who deny the deity of Jesus say this verse proves their point. They take the submission of God the Son as "proof" that He must not be equal in deity to God the Father. But the submission of Jesus to the Father doesn't come from any inherent inferiority. Instead, it comes from the administrative order of the Godhead. A Son is always in submission to His Father, even if both are "equal" in substance.

Simply put, God the Father will always be God the Father; and God the Son will always be God the Son; and for all eternity, they will continue to relate to each other as Father and Son.

E. CONCLUSION

According to the Word of God, because of Jesus' resurrection, all the born-again believers will have our own resurrection.