

Every genuine Christian affirms that Jesus Christ, having been crucified on a Roman cross, bodily rose from the dead on an actual day in history. Indeed, the objective, historical certainty of the resurrection is essential to salvation (1 Corinthians 15:17). Paul makes it clear that if Christ did not actually rise from the dead, preaching is vain and faith is vain (1 Corinthians 15:14). We therefore emphasize the historicity of the resurrection; but we must not ignore the equally important theology associated with it.

The Resurrection Affirmed Christ's Identity

The resurrection unmistakably identified Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah (Luke 24:44–46), as the true prophet of God (Matthew 12:38; John 2:18), and as the only begotten Son of God (Romans 1:4). Because the Old Testament predicted the glory that would follow the Messiah's suffering and death, the resurrection of Jesus was the powerful affirmation that He was in fact the Christ of God, the only Redeemer. His resurrection verified and validated every claim the Scripture made concerning the Messiah and that Christ made about Himself.

In His earthly preaching, Jesus staked His whole prophetic authority on the prediction that He would rise from the dead (the sign of Jonah [Matthew 12:39–40] and building the temple in three days [John 12:19, 21]). The resurrection set a seal on all His instructions and promises; it powerfully affirmed every other word He spoke, whether it was a word of grace or a warning of judgment. The implications are significant: If

He was right concerning this astounding prophecy, then everything else He said deserves careful hearing and obedience.

The Resurrection Accredited Christ's Atonement

The resurrection of Christ proved that Christ's atonement was accepted by God. Romans 4:25 makes that clear: "Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." The word *for* more specifically means "because." Consider the logic of the verse: Because of our justification, Christ was raised. His resurrection is the sign and the guarantee that God received His sacrifice as the full satisfaction of the Father's wrath against sin, the full payment for sin's penalty. Significantly, in this connection most of the references to the resurrection focus on God's activity in raising

up Christ. Although it is true that Christ arose, it is theologically vital that we understand and believe that He was raised by the power of God's Spirit. This was the great stamp of approval on a mission accomplished. Christ's active and passive obedience secured our justification; His resurrection assures us of that fact. His death showed His willingness to save; His resurrection showed His power to save. It is only because Jesus lives that we can know that the ransom was sufficient, that the sacrifice was accepted, and that we are purchased.

The Resurrection Acclaimed Christ's Authority

Acts 2:32–36 establishes the principle that the resurrection acclaimed Christ's authority: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. . . . Therefore, let all the

His Glorious Resurrection

Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel.

2 Timothy 2:8

house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” This passage suggests two thoughts. First, Christ is the head over all things to His church; He is the mediatorial ruler (Ephesians 1:20–22). The resurrection acclaims or declares His right to rule and to be the absolute Lord of all. Our confidence in His enthronement flows from our belief in His rising from the dead. A Christ held prisoner to the grave would be no different from any other person who dies, and He would therefore have no authority to rule. But that Christ does live after death and that He is consequently Lord of all are fundamental tenets of Christianity. Because He rules, believers ought to be encouraged, and sinners ought to be warned since the right to rule confers the right to judge. Second, His continuing life—the consequence of His resurrection—gives Him the uniquely special authority to be the mediatorial representative of His people (Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34). As the successful High Priest, He conspicuously bears our names before God. The resurrection is the bedrock for His session work, itself a distinct feature of His exaltation.

The Resurrection Achieved Our Salvation

The Scripture links the new birth directly to the operation

of the resurrection: We have been begotten “again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). Similarly, the Bible defines full salvation in terms of the Saviour’s life following His death: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Romans 5:10). If by His death Christ fulfilled every condition to purchase life for those united to Him, then those united to Him will be certainly saved in and by His life. In fact, the resurrection of Christ stands as the great guarantee of the success of His whole mission.

Paul’s great defense of the believer’s resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 includes two far-reaching statements that avow the impossibility of salvation without the resurrection. First, if Christ is still dead, then the gospel is worthless (verses 14 & 17). Paul compares the message of the gospel to a shell without a nut: It is empty, full of nothing. Without a resurrection, any faith in Christ is useless. After all, the object of faith determines the value of faith. Faith in a dead Christ is worthless. Second, if Christ is still dead, then believers will perish. A dead Christ cannot do anything for anyone. Intensity or sincerity of faith in Him does not infuse Him with saving power. A Christ who lives in the heart is good, but if the heart is only place He lives, there is no salvation. Believing doesn’t make the resurrection true. Christianity is not make-believe. It is belief based in real, historic facts. Therefore, because the resurrection is true, believing it is salvation.

The Resurrection Assures Our Immortality

Christ’s life after death not only revealed the destiny of believers but also guarantees the life of every believer. Jesus said, “Because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19). His simple cause-effect logic is irrefutable. The logic of 1 Corinthians 15:20–23 is equally impeccable. That Christ is the “firstfruits of them that slept” means simply that others are going to follow Him out of death into life. Christ’s resurrection powerfully and infallibly holds ours in tow. It is impossible for those in Christ to perish. Spiritual union with Christ assures and necessitates everlasting life. It is the indisputable fact that in Adam all must die; so in Christ all must live (1 Corinthians 15:21–22). As the first Adam, who died, took his natural descendants into death with him, so the second Adam, who rose from the dead, takes His spiritual seed to life with Him. Christ redeemed us completely, and not one part of redeemed man will ever perish, not even the body. By His resurrection, Christ “hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10). ■



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