

WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD KNOW  
LESSON 9  
GOD THE SON: HIS RESURRECTION

INTRODUCTION

Consider the hub in the center of a wagon wheel: if it is removed, all of the connecting spokes lose their supportive ability and tumble to the ground, the wheel cannot be joined to the object it was intended to transport, and it completely loses its ability to function. The same thing can be said of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is the central truth of the Christian faith, and were it to be removed or to be proven false, the credibility of Christianity would evaporate like the morning dew.

Scripture provides the timeline and the significance of this seminal event, but beyond the pages of the Bible, no one has better captured the reality of the moments surrounding the return of Jesus Christ's Spirit to His three day old corpse than the Reverend Peter Marshall, former Chaplain of the US Senate, and subject of his wife's "best selling" biography, A Man Called Peter:

“...suddenly at a given time between sunset and dawn...  
there is a rustling as of the breath of God moving through a garden.

“ A Man rises up from the cold stone slab where He had been laid...”

“...We must be able to see in mind's eye  
the discarded graveclothes lying there,  
like a glove from which the hand has been removed,  
the fingers of which still retain the shape of the hand-  
lying there  
collapsed a little, slightly deflated,  
because there was between the rolls of bandages a considerable weight of spices...

“We must be able to hear it---  
Catch a whiff of the strange scents that must have drifted back to the Man from that tomb  
of linen and bandages  
of spices – myrrh and aloes –  
and close air and blood...”

“...We must see Him as He walks to the threshold of the tomb,  
stands swaying for a moment on wounded feet  
and walks out into the dewy garden, alive forevermore...”

Marshall's what- it- must - have –been- like poetic description forces us to come to grips with the precise moment when Jesus' dead, mortal body “put on immortality” and gave every believer, from that day to this, the blessed hope of immortality for which every human being since Adam has longed.

Not only does the Christian faith depend on it, the entire New Testament is built on it: the gospels provide the facts surrounding it; Acts describes the apostles proclamation of the Resurrection and

records their prayers to the One who lives and reigns in Heaven; the epistles presuppose a living, reigning, Savior and provide the logic behind the apologetic which defends the faith based on its truth; the Revelation describes the appearance of Jesus' glorified body and presents the scene in the throne room of heaven where He rules and reigns forever as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The truth of the Resurrection envelopes the past, present, and the future. David, writing a thousand years before Christ's birth in Psalm 16, said:

“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;  
My body will also rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave,  
Nor will you let your Holy One see decay.”

Job asked the question in chapter 15: “If a man dies, will he live again?” In chapter 19, he not only answered the question about his (and our) immortality, but linked it with the resurrection of His Savior:

“I know that my Redeemer lives and that at the end  
he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been  
destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God. I myself will see him  
with my own eyes – I, and not another. “

In Job's and David's day, as well as our own, the Resurrection is the defining dogma of true faith. Today people are willing to regard Jesus as a “good man” or a “great teacher”, but the dividing line is always drawn with the Resurrection. Paul's Mars Hill address gives eloquent testimony to this fact:

“For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice  
by the man He has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising  
Him from the dead.” When they heard about the resurrection of the dead,  
some of them sneered....(Acts 17:31-32)

In dealing with the subject of the Resurrection, there are two things which must be considered and they form the division of this study:

- I. The Sources of Resurrection Truth
- II. The Significance of Resurrection Theology

### I. The Sources of Resurrection Truth

In Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth he systematically lays out the proof of Jesus' resurrection and proclaims it to be “of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that He was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures...” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4) Among the eyewitnesses he includes Peter, the Twelve, five hundred of the brothers and finally, to “one born out of time” i.e. to him, personally. Add in Mary Magdalene and the women on Easter Sunday and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and you have ample testimony to the reality and truth of the Resurrection.

It must first be noted that instances of people being brought back from the dead in both the Old and New Testaments are, strictly speaking, not a resurrection in the formal sense of the word. Those brought back to life by Elijah, Elisha, and Jesus fit into the category of resuscitations. Their bodies were still subject to weakness, disease, and eventual death. Jesus Himself does not fit into this category because He had undergone the transformation described in 1 Corinthians 15:53 and had “put on immortality”. This is attested to by Matthew 28:9 in describing how the disciples “came to Him, clasped

His feet, and worshiped Him.” after He had risen from the dead. Also, John 20:27 testified to the fact that Thomas touched Him.

His Resurrection body is linked to his earthly body in several aspects:

1. People recognized Him – John 20:20
2. His body retained His crucifixion wounds – John 20: 25-39
3. He had the ability to eat – Luke 24:40-43; Acts 10:41
4. He had flesh and bones – Luke 24:38-39

His body was also different in a number of key points:

1. He could enter a room without opening a door
2. He could appear and disappear at will
3. His body was glorified – Revelation 1:12-16

Peter, in addressing Cornelius and his household at Caesarea in what is known as “the Gentile Pentecost” declared that “They killed Him by hanging Him on a tree, but God raised Him from the dead on the third day and caused Him to be seen” . Acts 10:40

The Resurrection is given its most eloquent validity by heaven itself. When Mary Magdalene came to the tomb, the angelic messenger present at the former grave of Joseph of Arimathea declared: “He is not here; He is risen, just as He said. Come see the place where He laid”. (Matthew 28:6) The drama of this moment is breathtaking by itself, but the phrase “just as He said” confirms Jesus’ role as a prophet as well as being a priest and a king.

Through the ages, the church has celebrated the day on which the Resurrection occurred(Sunday) by making it the day of worship instead of the Sabbath of Judaism. All of Christian worship, therefore, is eloquent testimony to the truth and significance of this event!

## II. The Significance of Resurrection Theology

Having considered Jesus’ Resurrection as a historical fact and cornerstone of the Christian faith, we must now consider its significance for those who believe and trust in Him. His Resurrection is described as being the” first fruits” of a new kind of body. (I Corinthians 15:53)

In Paul’s great treatise on the resurrection body in I Corinthians 15:42-44 he says it is “raised imperishable....in glory...in power...a spiritual body”. Care must be taken with that phrase, “a spiritual body”. It does not mean immaterial. The meaning has to do with the fact that it is now under the control of and responsive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Grudem’s theology takes great care to avoid confusion by saying:

“The RSV translation ‘It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body’ is very misleading because Paul does not use the word that was available to him if had meant to speak of a physical body (Gk. ‘somaticos’), but rather uses the word ‘psychikos’, which in this context means ‘natural’, that is, a body that is living in its own life and strength and in the characteristics of this present age but is not fully subject to and conforming to the character and will of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, a clearer paraphrase would be, ‘It is sown a natural body subject to the characteristics and desires of this age, and governed by its own

sinful will, but it is raised a spiritual body completely subject to the will of the Holy Spirit and responsible to the Holy Spirit's guidance'. Such a body is not at all non-physical, but it is a physical body raised to the degree of physical perfection for which God originally intended it."

Before examining the doctrinal and ethical significances of the Resurrection, one more theological ramification must be considered. Both the Father and the Son participated in the Resurrection. It could be assumed that since the Trinity was present at the Creation and the baptism of Jesus, that the Spirit was involved also. The Father's participation is described in Acts 2:24, Romans 6:4, I Corinthians 6:14, Galatians 1:1, Ephesians 1:20. The Son's contribution is suggested in John 10:17-18, 2:19-21, 11:25 and Hebrews 7:16.

#### A. Doctrinal Significance of the Resurrection

##### 1. The Resurrection ensures our regeneration

We are "born anew to a living hope" – I Peter 1:3

He "raised us up with Him" - Ephesians 2:5-6

Paul said "that I may know Him and the power of His Resurrection" – Philippians 3:10

Paul prays that the Ephesians would know "what is the immeasurable greatness of His power in us who believe, according to the working of His great might which He accomplished in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and made Him sit at His right hand in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 1:19-20)

##### 2. The Resurrection ensures our justification

In Paul's letter to the church in Rome he states "He was delivered over to death for our sins, and was raised to life for our justification".

##### 3. The Resurrection ensures we will receive perfect resurrection bodies.

Paul reminded the Corinthians that "By His power God raised the Lord from the dead and He will raise us also".

The connection between Christ's Resurrection and our own is eloquently and meticulously described by Paul in the great passage in I Corinthians 15:12-58.

Christ is the "first fruits" and we are the final harvest. Our bodies will be "incorruptible" and "raised in glory".

#### B. The Ethical Significance of the Resurrection

##### 1. Our response to the Resurrection

Because of the Resurrection we should be steadfast, abounding in God's work.

##### 2. Sin should not control us

We are to be "dead to sin, alive to God in Christ Jesus".

3. The result of the Resurrection

Resurrection power is to have dominion in our lives.

4. We do not fight the battle alone

Jesus' most comforting statement to us is "and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world".

Having begun this study with a literary/poetical look at the Resurrection, we might do well by closing in a similar fashion. John Updike's poem "Seven Stanzas At Easter" takes a scientific and physiological look at the event and warns us to take it as literal truth and be certain that we not "mock God with metaphor".

Seven Stanzas at Easter

Make no mistake: if He rose at all  
it was as His body;  
if the cell's dissolution did not reverse, the molecules  
reknit, the amino acids rekindle,  
the Church will fall.

It was not as the flowers,  
each soft spring recurrent;  
it was not as His Spirit in the mouths and fuddled  
eyes of the eleven apostles;  
it was as His Flesh; ours.

The same hinged thumbs and toes,  
the same valved heart  
that – pierced – died, withered, paused, and then  
regathered out of enduring Might  
new strength to enclose.

Let us not mock God with metaphor,  
analogy, sidestepping transcendence;  
making of the event a parable, a sign painted in the  
faded credulity of earlier ages:  
let us walk through the door.

The stone is rolled back, not papier-mached,  
not a stone in a story,  
but the vast rock of materiality that in the slow  
grinding of time will eclipse for each of us  
the wide light of day.

And if we will have an angel at the tomb,  
make it a real angel,  
weighty with Max Planck's quanta, vivid with hair,  
opaque in the dawn light, robed in real linen  
spun on a definite loom.

Let us not seek to make it less monstrous,  
for our own convenience, our own sense of beauty,  
lest, awakened in one unthinkable hour, we are  
embarrassed by the miracle,  
and crushed by remonstrance.

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