

Meditations on the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ

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 Date: April 16, 2006 (Easter Sunday)
 Title: "If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied."
 Text: 1 Corinthians 15:12-19
 Theme: The Resurrection of Jesus Christ forms the foundation of our Christian faith. Without the Resurrection of Christ, we have no hope.

ILLUSTRATION:

Easter is a day not only of hope, but discord — at least among theologians.

Throughout modern times, liberal scholars have challenged a central tenet of Christianity: that Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead after being crucified by the Romans on Good Friday.

Whether the Resurrection occurred, they say, is ultimately unimportant compared with Christ's message. (April 18, 2003, [Easter Debate Revisited](#), CBS News)

The death, burial, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ form the bedrock on which the Christian life is established and built. In its absence there is nothing but wood, hay, and stubble.

It is the message of the Resurrection that created an enormous stir for the early church and those who would oppose its message. This is seen in Acts 4:2, 17:18, and 32.

"Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the Resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:2).

"Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babblers say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the Resurrection" (Acts 17:18).

"And when they heard of the Resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter" (Acts 17:32).

During Paul's day and in our own time, people deny the Resurrection from the dead. Paul defended the doctrine of the Resurrection from the dead.

Consider with me the idea of the Resurrection as it is found in verses 1-4.

"'Died and was buried' are in the aorist tense. The change to the perfect marks the abiding state which began with the Resurrection. [This shift in tense is seen in verses 4 and 12]. He hath been raised and still lives. The perfect tense in Greek indicates completed action and a continuing state with primary emphasis on the continuation. Paul's theology stresses the fact that God raised Christ from the dead." (Ralph Earle, [Word Meanings in the New Testament: One-Volume Edition](#), 241, 242).

“The best news the world has ever had came from a graveyard near Jerusalem.”

The tyranny of the urgent always crowds out the power of the Resurrection. Our experiences and circumstances call us to deny the newness of life that is ours right now. Jesus Christ is Alive. This is the very corner stone and essence of our theology: Jesus Christ lives.

ILLUSTRATION:

Christ the Lord is Risen Today

Charles Wesley (1707-1788), 1739

Christ, the Lord, is risen today, Alleluia!
 Sons of men and angels say, Alleluia!
 Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
 Sing, ye heavens, and earth, reply, Alleluia!

Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!
 Our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!
 Who did once upon the cross, Alleluia!
 Suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!

Often my days are filled with denial. I hypocritically say I believe in a Resurrection, but deep down I am still living for the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life. I am still consumed by the temporal over against the eternal. I am, by my priorities, rejecting the Resurrection.

It is through the Resurrection from the dead that Jesus Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:4). It is the Resurrection idea that liberates Christ from the grave (1 Cor. 15:13).

Why am I teaching this?

There are four primary ideas set forth in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 that dictate the setting forth of a Resurrection.

I. In the absence of a Resurrection, Christ is still dead (vv. 12, 13, 16).

¹² 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, not even Christ has been raised;

¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised;

The emphasis is on a risen Christ. If no one is being raised from the dead, then neither has Jesus Christ been raised from the dead.

"As the Risen One He remains alive. By the death and burial of His body He came down to our condition; by His Resurrection He raised us to His position." (Vine, Corinthians, 204).

"Paul insisted that if the Resurrection of Jesus was not a fact the whole Christian message was based on a lie, that many thousands had died trusting in a delusion, that without it the greatest in life have no guarantee. 'Take away the Resurrection,' he said, 'and you destroy both the foundation and the fabric of the Christian faith.'" (Barclay, Corinthians, 149).

II. In the absence of a Resurrection, our preaching is vain (vv. 14a, 15)

¹⁴ and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.

¹⁵ Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.

So far, verses 12, 13, and 14 begin with a first class condition clause that assumes the reality of the condition for the sake of the argument.

The word "vain" in verse 14 means "empty, without content, nothingness, absolute void." (Rogers & Rogers) In the absence of the Resurrection, there is no purpose to the preaching of the apostle Paul or to having faith in the content of what is preached. "The apostle's preaching would have had no validity, and therefore would have afforded no ground for belief." (Vine, Corinthians, 203).

When we remove the Resurrection from the Christian faith, there is nothing left. The construction and word usage "implies the inevitable nature of the conclusion." (Rogers & Rogers)

In verse 15 the word found is "often used of moral judgments respecting character, and conveys the idea of discovering or detecting." (Rogers & Rogers)

ILLUSTRATION:

We are like the boy who cries wolf. In the absence of the Resurrection there is no message to proclaim, no hope to share, no healing, no rest, no contentment, no peace, no righteousness, no standing. There is only heartache and misery with no hope of deliverance.

III. In the absence of a Resurrection, your faith also is vain (vv. 14b, 17, 18).

¹⁴ and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.

¹⁷ and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

The same word used in verse 14 to describe vain preaching is also used to describe vain faith.

A word “worthless” in verse 17 “emphasizes the aimlessness and the leading to no object or end.” (Rogers & Rogers) How tragic. His Resurrection from the grave is the divine confirmation of His redemptive activity. In the absence of the Resurrection, the efficacious nature of His life and death becomes voided.

This is the hope with which we comfort those who are dying and those who have experienced separation through death. Paul’s basis for providing hope to those who have lost loved ones to death in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is based on a Resurrection from the dead. In the lack of His Resurrection, we have no hope in life or in death.

¹³ “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus” (1 Thess. 4:13-14).

It is the same message of hope brought by Jesus to His disciples in John 14:1-3.

¹ “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:1-3).

It is the hope of resurrection that gives us light in our darkness.

IV. In the absence of a Resurrection, we are of all men most to be pitied (v. 19).

¹⁹ If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied

The construction places emphasis on “in this life only.” If the hope we have exists only in the context of this life and not for the life to come, then comparatively speaking we are both miserable and wretched.

APPLICATION: (Where do we go from here?)

Our greatest danger is that we do not live our lives in the immediate hope that the Resurrection brings us. Our greatest danger is that we do not embrace the thought that Jesus Christ is alive and completely interactive with our daily lives.

- Because there is a resurrection, Jesus Christ is alive.
- Because there is a resurrection, what you and I say has worth.
- Because there is a resurrection, our sins are forgiven.
- Because there is a resurrection, we are of all men to be desired.

What does the Resurrection mean for you?

- Does it mean that you are now walking in newness of life?
- Does it mean that the grave has lost its sting?
- Does it speak of a time of unending light?
- Does it speak of hope and glory?
- Does it remove the cloud of despair?
- Does it cancel your present misery?
- Does it cause the moment to be filled with joy?

What would happen in its absence?

- Does the Resurrection mean anything to you?
- Does it affect the way you think?
- Does it affect the way you live your life, spend your money, love your spouse, raise your children, do your job, fulfill your roles?
- Does it change the way you view church attendance, or giving?
- Does it change the way you sing songs, watch TV, go on vacation?
- Does it alter your world view?
- Does it impact your relationships at home, with your children, with your family, with those you work?

What difference does the Resurrection of Jesus Christ make in your life?

Often I believe we are so consumed by the moment, distracted by the present, blinded by the tinsel, deafened by the noise, our experiences and our circumstances that we give little consent to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and our future hope in it.

ILLUSTRATION:

The Battle of Waterloo, fought on June 18, 1815, was Napoleon Bonaparte's last battle. After his exile to Elba, he had reinstated himself on the throne of France for a Hundred Days. During this time, the forces of the rest of Europe converged on him the commander of the United Kingdom's armies was Duke of Wellington.

It is reported that at the close of the Battle of Waterloo, upon the issue of which hung the destinies of Europe, the English people were anxiously awaiting news of the result. Their only means of communication was a system of signal lights flashed across the English Channel. The fog became so dense that only a part of the message was made out. It read, "Wellington defeated." Gloom settled upon the English. But imagine their joy when the fog lifted and they received the whole message, "Wellington defeated the enemy."

When Christ was crucified, His disciples were so enshrouded by the fogs of doubt that they saw but one meaning to the sad event, "Christ defeated." All hope was gone; Christ was dead. But Easter morning brought the glorious fact of the risen Lord, and the message read, "Christ defeated the devil." How glorious! By dying, Christ conquered the grave; by ascending, Christ made

possible our ascension even to heaven. Hallelujah! "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." <http://elbourne.org/sermons/index.mv?illustration+2395>

ILLUSTRATION:

The whole system of Christianity rests upon the truth that Jesus Christ rose from the grave. This Resurrection hymn "Christ the Lord is Risen Today" has been one of the church's most popular Easter hymns.

It was first written by Charles Wesley one year after his heart-warming experience at the Aldersgate Hall in London, England, in 1738. This hymn was written by Charles for the first service in the Wesleyan Chapel in London. That chapel was first a deserted iron foundry. It became known as the Foundry Meeting House. http://www.tanbible.com/tol_sng/christthelordisrisentoday.htm

Christ the Lord is Risen Today

Charles Wesley (1707-1788), 1739

Christ, the Lord, is risen today, Alleluia!
Sons of men and angels say, Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, ye heavens, and earth, reply, Alleluia!

Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!
Lo! the Sun's eclipse is over, Alleluia!
Lo! He sets in blood no more, Alleluia!

Vain the stone, the watch, the seal, Alleluia!
Christ hath burst the gates of hell, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids his rise, Alleluia!
Christ hath opened Paradise, Alleluia!

Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!
Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!
Once he died our souls to save, Alleluia!
Where thy victory, O grave? Alleluia!

Soar we now where Christ hath led, Alleluia!
Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!
Made like Him, like Him we rise, Alleluia!
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!

Hail, the Lord of earth and heaven, Alleluia!
Praise to thee by both be given, Alleluia!
Thee we greet triumphant now, Alleluia!
Hail, the Resurrection day, Alleluia!

King of glory, Soul of bliss, Alleluia!
 Everlasting life is this, Alleluia!
 Thee to know, thy power to prove, Alleluia!
 Thus to sing and thus to love, Alleluia!

Hymns of praise then let us sing, Alleluia!
 Unto Christ, our heavenly King, Alleluia!
 Who endured the cross and grave, Alleluia!
 Sinners to redeem and save. Alleluia!

But the pains that he endured, Alleluia!
 Our salvation have procured, Alleluia!
 Now above the sky He's King, Alleluia!
 Where the angels ever sing. Alleluia!

Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!
 Our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!
 Who did once upon the cross, Alleluia!
 Suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!

4 natural statements from the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

1. Truth is stronger than falsehood.
 What He has promised has come to pass.
2. Good is stronger than evil.
 God has triumphed over sin and the devil.
3. Love is stronger than hatred.
 Jesus loved those who spitefully treated Him. “The Resurrection is the triumph of love over all that hatred could do.” (Barclay, Corinthians, 147).
4. Life is stronger than death.
 In the Resurrection from the dead, death loses its sting, and hope is born.

How to have 7 Sundays – The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is not an event that we simply note on Easter morning, but on every day of each week. We serve a risen Savior.