

WHAT DOES THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST MEAN TO THOSE OF US WHO BELIEVE?

Various Scriptures

Scripture Reading: John 20:1-18

Intro: Most of us know the account given to us in the NT of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. More than that, we firmly believe that those records given to us in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are true. We firmly believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died on a Cross, that His body was placed in a tomb, and that, on the third day afterwards, He was raised from the dead. His body glorified, never to die again.

In a day when it seems that first one thing about Jesus Christ is denied, and then another, and then another, and so on, to God's glory, and the glory of Christ, and to the glory of the Holy Spirit, we joyfully take our stand with those who believe in physical resurrection of the Son of God. And there are millions of people around the world who today, believe as we do, and as the Bible teaches, that the Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead never to die again. We agree with the Apostle Paul who wrote in Romans 6:9-10:

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

The prophet Isaiah predicted that when the Lord would hang on the Cross, people looking at Him could wonder if that was a human body, and yet three days later He walked out of His tomb the only marks on His body were where the nails had been driven through His hands and feet, and where the spear had been thrust into His side.

Now I am not saying that I can say in one message what the meaning of the Cross is for those of us who are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior. In the first place, I don't have that kind of wisdom, that full of an understanding of all that the Lord accomplished for us when He died on the Cross. But in the time we have this morning, I want to point out just a few of the messages contained for us in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The first passage I would call your attention to is Romans 4:25. Please turn to it in your Bibles as we consider it together.

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This verse says, speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom. 4:25).

But if you go on reading in Romans 5, when you come to verse 9 you will read that we are “justified by His blood.” That is, we are justified by His sacrifice on the Cross, not by His resurrection as Romans 4:25 seems to be saying. How do we reconcile these two passages? Where did the Lord obtain justification for us? Obviously He did it when He offered Himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins by dying on the Cross. Then what does Romans 4:25 mean?

It means that God, to show that Jesus Christ had done everything necessary for our justification on the Cross, raised Him from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was God’s way of telling us that Christ had done everything necessary for our salvation, and that His sacrifice had been accepted by God! When people feel that they have to do something in addition to what Christ did when He died on the Cross, it is because they do not understand the full meaning of the resurrection. Let me say it this way: If there had been any way in which God was not satisfied with the work of Christ on the Cross, Jesus Christ would not have been raised from the dead. Jesus Christ did a perfect work at Calvary. As we sing, “Jesus paid it all.” God raised our Lord from the dead as a testimony that He was completely satisfied with the death of Christ for the full salvation of all who would believe on Him, who would trust Him for salvation.

The world doesn’t understand this about the resurrection of Christ. In fact, the world has devised many ways of trying to explain that our Lord’s resurrection was not physical. Let me say, if His resurrection was not physical, we have no assurance that Jesus Christ can save us. But, thank God, we do have that assurance, and that should be uppermost in our minds on Easter Sunday. In fact, it ought to be uppermost in our minds every Sunday. That is the reason that we meet on Sunday, the Lord’s Day, instead of the Jewish Sabbath. The Church of Jesus Christ celebrates the resurrection of Christ every Sunday.

But let me take this a step farther. What does the Bible mean by justification? It means that by trusting in Jesus Christ and His death on the Cross, we are justified before God, declared to be righteous. All charges of sin against us have been satisfied before God because of Christ’s death on the Cross. All of the sins of all of those who really are trusting in Christ for their salvation, have been atoned for by the death of Christ. We are for-

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given. And twice in the book of Hebrews, in 8:12 and 10:17 we are told that God will remember our sins and iniquities against us no more. There is no possibility that anyone who has been declared righteous before God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will ever lose their salvation. And it is not because we, the people of God, never sin, but it is because when Christ died on the Cross He died for all of our sins – past, present, and future. And, if you think about Christ on the Cross, all of our sins were still future when He died for us.

We are not saved because we deserved to be saved. Nor are we saved because we asked God to provide a Savior for us. It was while we were yet sinners that Christ died for us. Our salvation is a gift from God, but it was purchased for us at the infinite price of the death of God's Son, the incarnate Lord Jesus Christ.

So remember this: God raised His Son from the dead because He had done everything necessary for us to be forgiven forever, and delivered from the judgment of God, which except for the death of Christ, would have meant an eternal hell for all of us. Christ was raised again because He had done everything necessary for our justification.

That is the first point I want to make with you this morning. Now let me take you to a second point.

We find this in Romans, chapter 6. Please turn there with me. The Apostle Paul spent a lot of time dealing with the truth that I am going to mention to you now.

Paul makes it very clear in these chapters to Romans that not only did Christ die for us on the Cross, but all who will ever believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, died with Him and in Him.

Now we all know that we as God's people can still sin, and that we do sin. But it is in understanding not only the death of the Lord Jesus Christ for us, but in understanding our death with Him, that we come to be able to live a different kind of a life after we are saved than we did before we were saved. Please follow me in your Bibles as I read from the middle of Romans 6:4 to 6:6. (Read.)

Not only did we die with Christ, and in Christ, but "like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should

walk in newness of life.” By our union with Christ, our relationship with Christ in His death *and resurrection*, we are enabled to “walk in newness of life.” Now we all need to understand that word “walk.” We could translate it *live* because that is what it means. It includes how we live, the way we talk, even the way we think. Being saved means that we become different, completely different, from what we were before. We are enabled to be and do what we could never have done or been before. This word “newness” means a new quality of life. It is what the Apostle Paul had in mind when in 2 Corinthians 5:17 he wrote, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (or a new creation): old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” And this is what we have been reading about in 1 John, isn’t it? We love God and want to learn all we can about Him. We love His Son. We love the Holy Spirit. We love the Lord’s people. We love God’s Word. None of this is a perfect love, but it is a growing love. We can still sin. We can still be tempted, but the new life that we have in Christ is more powerful than the old way of living.

But notice how all of this is related to the resurrection of Christ. What the resurrection of Christ meant to Him, sets the pattern for what our resurrection with Christ will mean in our lives. You and I belong to Christ by His eternal decree, and that all becomes evident in our lives when we are born again. When Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, death no longer could touch Him. Death no longer has dominion over Him as having become one with us in His humanity, but raised in glory, never able to die again.

So when we consider the resurrection of Christ, and our union with Christ in His resurrection, it is to be a reminder to us that we are to walk in newness of life, not by our own strength, but by His life in us. And so, not just once a year, but Sunday after Sunday, as we are reminded of the resurrection of Christ, it is to be a reminder to us that we are to “walk in newness of life.”

I just have time for one more point having to do with the resurrection of Christ and its message to us. And for this I want you to go with me to 1 Thessalonians 4. I want you to see that it is through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus that we have our blessed hope. So please turn with me to 1 Thessalonians 4, and we will be looking at verses 13 to 18. I want you to see that the Apostle Paul linked the death and resurrection of Christ to the return of our Lord.

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When the Apostle Paul said “if we believe that Jesus died and rose again,” he did it in a way the Greeks had of expressing themselves which would allow us to translated that phrase, “since we believe that Jesus died and rose again.” There is not going to be any “if” regarding the death and resurrection of Christ with true believers. That is a positive conviction with us, isn’t it? Now if Jesus Christ were not raised from the dead, not only would we be without a Savior, but we would have no hope after death. But since we believe in the death and physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and we are in Him, so we believe in the resurrection of all of those who have died before the Lord returns as He promised that He would. So we can understand that if the Lord had not been raised from the dead, we would have no hope of seeing our loved ones again who have gone to be with the Lord because if the Lord had not been raised, there would be no resurrection for those who have died before us, nor for us when we die!

Yesterday at the service for Ruth Hanson, the Pastor read a lot of Scripture verses. One passage he read was the first few verses of John 14 which most Christians know because they have read them so often, and have heard others read them. And it was a blessing to me to hear them again. (Quote them – “Let not your heart be troubled . . .”) Jesus said those words knowing that He was going to die, *but He said them also knowing that He was going to be raised from the dead! And He said those words knowing that His resurrection would assure our resurrection.*

“The dead in Christ shall rise first” – not a long time before, but maybe seconds before us who will be living then, but changed to be made like our Lord, and like those whose bodies will be raised and glorified as we are prepared to be “forever with the Lord.”

So just taking this brief look at the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ on this Easter Sunday, we have been reminded that there would have been no salvation if Christ had not been raised from the dead. Nor would there be any such thing as a godly life for us, if Christ had not been raised. Nor would we have the hope that is before us if our Lord’s body were still in the tomb.

I am going to close my message this morning by reading 1 Corinthians 15:12-24 which Paul addressed to those in those early days who were skeptical about the resurrection of the dead. This is what he said:

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12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

May the Lord give us special blessing today as we rejoice in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and may we praise God and His dear Son that the resurrection of Christ assures our resurrection and glorification and teaches us so many lessons that are a blessing to us as we await the return of our Lord.

KJV