

Sunday, March 31, 2024 am

REMEMBERING THE RESURRECTION

Today, much of the world pauses to remember the death/burial and resurrection of Jesus. In a broken and evil world that increasingly is rejecting Him, this serves as a reminder that there is more to life than the “here and now”. Mankind has a real purpose during his short life span. Moses wrote in Psalm 90:10, *The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.* Because of this Moses requests of God, *So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.*

It is my desire that all of mankind would live with a realization that a day of judgment is coming. BUT, in so doing, I would like them to know that there is hope. And that hope is found in the resurrection of Jesus.

I. The reality of the resurrection

- a. Recorded in all 4 gospels. The final chapter of Matthew – Luke and John 20-21 record the resurrection and following events. The rest of the New Testament makes continual reference to the resurrection as an event that gives us hope.
- b. It is at the very core of the Christian faith. The resurrection is the one Biblical event that distinguishes the Christian faith from ALL other belief systems. Disprove the resurrection and Christianity (the belief in Jesus and that He did arise from the dead) fails.
- c. Because of this, critics of Jesus focus on denying the resurrection. If you can prove that Jesus did not arise from the dead, there is no “Christianity”.
- d. AND, because of this, IF you prove the resurrection, you establish the Bible as God’s word and standard for salvation (dismissing all other teachings).
- e. The evidence FOR the reality of the resurrection of Jesus is overwhelming. We have devoted consider time to a study of why the resurrection happened. In summary here are some reasons why I believe that Jesus did arise from the dead.
 - i. **Because I believe the Bible is the inspired word of God.** 2 Timothy 3:16-17. If it is, then what it teaches is true (cf. John 17:17). The Bible clearly declares that Jesus arose from the dead – 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. It was the catalyst theme of the preaching in the book of Acts. Acts 2:23-33, on Pentecost, Peter declared Jesus raised from the dead.
 - ii. **There are multiple accounts of His resurrection** – the 4 gospels and Paul (1 Corinthians 15:8).
 - iii. **Jesus was seen by multiple witnesses after He arose.** 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 records several appearances of Jesus. As Paul writes he describes: 1) Leaders – Peter, the apostles, James – the Lord’s brother; 2) People on multiple occasions – apostles – at least 3 times; 3) a group of 500 at one time (most were still alive when Paul wrote), 4) finally, by Paul himself (a skeptic). Add to this that all 4 gospels record appearances to various women and a few other appearances. There are TOO MANY eyewitnesses to just dismiss the accounts as fiction. ALSO, His critics could NOT disprove His resurrection (they denied it, but could not prove it).
 - iv. **The tomb was empty.** The fact that the tomb was empty is accepted by the majority of historical scholars who have studied the records. This includes many skeptics and unbelievers. They present various theories as possible explanations (wrong tomb, stolen body, swoon, etc.), but a conclusive argument against the empty tomb has not

been made. Many have tried, but every attempted argument falls short of the historical evidence FOR the empty tomb.

- v. **The conversion of Paul and James the brother of Jesus.** 1 Corinthians 15:8-9. Both Paul and James, the brother of Jesus were known skeptics UNTIL they saw the risen Jesus.
 - 1. James, along with his brothers – did not believe Jesus (John 7:5). But we find him as a leader in the church at Jerusalem (Galatians 1:19). Many believe him to be the author of the book of James in scripture.
 - 2. Paul persecuted Christians and tried to crush the movement, UNTIL he saw the Lord on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6). After his conversion, he became one of the faith's strongest advocates.
- vi. **The recorded conversion of many AFTER the resurrection.** Colossians 1:23 records that within that generation, the "faith" (gospel about Jesus) had been "preached to every creature under heaven." While clearly hyperbole (obvious exaggeration), the point was the gospel had been widely proclaimed throughout the empire. The Bible gives numerous conversion accounts. While sparse, there are several external, historical acknowledgments to the movement after the resurrection. Clearly the Christian faith was something that began AFTER Jesus arose from the dead and continues even to this day.
- vii. **The impact that Christianity has had on the world since Jesus came, even to this day.** Why are we here today? Why is the Bible still the #1 best seller? Without the resurrection, there would be no lasting Christian faith.
- viii. **Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19** made a case for the importance of the resurrection. He noted, that if there is no resurrection, our faith is empty. We have no hope beyond this life and "are of all men most pitiable."
- ix. **Examining the evidence for the resurrection IS a worthwhile pursuit.**

II. How the Bible teaches us to remember the resurrection

- a. Establishing the fact of the resurrection, we also need to consider what the Bible says about observing the resurrection.
- b. It records it and makes frequent references to it. **Romans 1:3-4**, Paul writes, *concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.* **Philippians 3:8-11**, Paul in describing all he gave up to follow Jesus and WHY, *Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.* This is but a sampling of passages that emphasize the importance of the resurrection. More to follow as we make specific points.
- c. **When we obey the gospel, the act of baptism takes us back to the DBR.**
 - i. Our hope of salvation is found in the death and resurrection of Jesus.
 - ii. We believe that God has raised Him from the dead (Romans 10:9)

- iii. We repent of having followed the ways of the world – Acts 2:38 – after concluding a sermon about the resurrection of Jesus. Acts 17:30-31 in Athens, Paul preached repentance noting that God had given assurance of this by raising Him from the dead.
 - iv. Confession Jesus – what do we confess? Romans 10:9-10 – that Jesus is Lord and has been raised from the dead.
 - v. Baptized for the remission of our sins. That is what Peter declared in Acts 2:38. But notice also Romans 6:3-4, *we are buried with Him through baptism, that as Christ was raised from the dead, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* Colossians 2:12 also emphasizes this, *buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.*
 - vi. IF you are to obey the gospel it is IMPERATIVE that you believe that Jesus died for your sins AND that He was raised from the dead, never to die again. It is that belief that leads us to OBEY the gospel steps outlined.
- d. ***The Lord's Supper is weekly memorial each Sunday that Jesus did arise from the dead.***
- i. Before Jesus died, He instituted the Lord's Supper. Matthew 26:26-28, on the night of his betrayal, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Paul repeated that occasion as he dealt with how to PROPERLY partake of the Lord's Supper. He also tied it to the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead.
 - ii. Acts 20:7 finds Paul waiting 7 days in Troas to meet with saints. We then read, *Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.* The "breaking of bread" was a reference to the Lord's Supper. From this example, we conclude that it is something to be done regularly AND on EVERY Sunday. This is the ONLY passage that gives us direction as to WHEN it was taken.
 - iii. NOTE: Sunday was the day that Jesus arose from the dead which is emphasized in all 4 gospels (Mark 16:1-2, Matthew 28:1, Luke 24:1, John 20:1). There is significance to partaking of this memorial EVERY Sunday. Thus the fact that we meet on Sunday is a testament to the resurrection of Jesus.
- e. ***As we consider what awaits us after this life.***
- i. We live with hope of being raised to live with Him in heaven. The resurrection of Jesus gives us that hope.
 - ii. 1 Peter 1:3, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*
 - iii. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Paul gave assurance of a resurrection for us BECAUSE we believe that Jesus died and rose again...
 - iv. Again recall 1 Corinthians 15:18-19, if in this life only...
 - v. Most want to live longer and anticipate living in a place where we do not have to worry about the brokenness that is around us. For the saved, BECAUSE Jesus arose from the dead, we have hope of something much better after this life.
- f. These are some ways that we remember the resurrection of Jesus. But that leads to one final point we need to address.

III. **What about Easter?**

- a. For many today, this day is set aside as a special day of the year to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus. That is what “Easter Sunday” is about. But there is a spiritual problem that we must consider: The Bible nowhere speaks of this annual observance.
- b. In fact, while this was one of the earliest “holy days” related to the Christian faith, its earliest observance dates back to the 2nd century AD (about 100 years AFTER Christ died and arose AND His church was established) and then it was tied to the Jewish Passover observance (which incidentally was a fixed date, NOT a certain day of the week). Again, there is NO record of its observance in the Bible.
- c. The calendar date observed today dates to the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. At that time, it was determined that it should be observed the first Sunday after the first full moon following the “vernal equinox” (the beginning of Spring), which is typically near March 21st. That is why each year it can occur some time between March 22-April 25th. This was a council of men who made many decisions based on tradition, some Biblically based, but others not so much.
- d. There are at least 2 Biblical problems with this observance:
 - i. It appeals to the traditions of men. In Matthew 15:1-9, Jesus condemned the binding of traditions as they set aside God’s commands. He declared that in such their worship to God was “in vain” (empty). Galatians 4:8-11 Paul expressed concerns saying, *But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, **how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years.** I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.* Easter is observed AS IF it was what first century Christians did, BUT, as noted, it is nowhere found in the Bible. Following the traditions of men makes worship more about what we want than what God wants. As you study your Bible from beginning to end, you will learn that God has ALWAYS been very specific about how He wants us to worship Him.
 - ii. Its establishment is based on the silence of scripture – i.e., “*the Bible does not say we cannot do this.*” When God is silent, we must respect His boundaries. 2 John 9 notes, *Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.* Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 4:6, *Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, **that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.*** Where God sets boundaries, we need to respect these boundaries. (Cf. Matthew 7:21-23)
- e. Again, I am glad that people pause to remember the resurrection of Jesus. I believe that this day gives the atheist/agnostic/unbeliever an unwelcome reminder that Jesus DID come to this earth and had an impact unlike any other in all of human history. BUT my concern is how so many ONLY pause 1 or 2 times a year to think about this. That is a problem with the observance of Easter. The Christian now lives his life FOR the Lord – Galatians 2:20, Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 5:17, etc.

What we do today is no different from any other Sunday when we gather. Let us resolve that we will let the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus be our motivation every day of the year. And let us remember all that He did the way He directs us to do so. How do you remember His resurrection? Think about it!