

**The Greatest Truth that Did or Did Not Happen
And Resurrection Consolation
I Cor 15**

Today we come to the central focus of the life of Christ – His death and resurrection. It should not surprise us that those are the two things that the average person outside the church, and sometimes inside the church, DON'T WANT to focus on.

When it comes to the Resurrection, we encounter the greatest truth and DID or DID NOT HAPPEN.

If we're intellectually honest, we need to wrestle with this claim.

The bible invites us to wrestle with or investigate the narrative of the Resurrection.

This is not an issue of 'your truth or my truth'.

Christianity is about THE TRUTH, and it is built upon the Resurrection. There are 300 verses that deal with the resurrection or its impact on our belief and practice.

If you're here today and you're skeptical, then you're in good company. Every believer in this room was skeptical at some point.

The great Christian apostle and author of much of the NT – Paul was a more critical and severe skeptic than you've ever been. He went about arresting and jailing Christians in the early church.

BUT something happened that change his life – He encountered the risen Christ.

** Note to self: Your life will change when you encounter someone who has come back from the dead.

Even today, Jesus still tends to be viewed 'favorably' by people outside the church as long as they just consider SOME OF HIS TEACHING. But they would like to avoid the issues of his death and resurrection and what they mean.

There are those who would seek to pick apart some of the teachings of Jesus or some of the miracles of the Bible. Easter gives us the yearly reminder to make the main thing the MAIN THING.

If someone is going to have problems with the Bible, God or Jesus, at least focus on the MAIN thing – THE RESURRECTION.

This the point on which all of it stands or falls.

1 Cor 15:3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;

Easter is a time for this kind of certainty, right?

Some folks are certain it didn't happen.

Others are certain it did.

When it comes to the resurrection, there are two key perspectives:

- 1) **This is simply impossible**- just "follow the science". Dead people don't come back to life. I get it and so did the Christians of the 1st century. Nobody expected to find NO BODY in the tomb. Even the simple uneducated folk who followed Jesus weren't too keen on all the talk of resurrection.
- 2) **"This is too good to be true"** . THAT IS THE awe that we find identified in the gospels.

#1 This is simply impossible- just "follow the science."

There are those who hold this view because the philosophical secular naturalist worldview has a prior commitment to a belief that the material world is all there is. But there is NOTHING about the nature of this world or our experience in this world that DEMANDS a pure naturalistic approach. It is a choice, not an empirical necessity.

C.S. Lewis -Reflections on the Psalms: The real reason why I CAN accept as historical a story in which a miracle occurs is that I have never found any philosophical grounds for the universal negative proposition that miracles do not happen.

In that naturalist worldview, there is no such thing as God or supernatural intervention. Thus, a resurrection is impossible, or so the naturalist believes.

The secular naturalist can only BELIEVE there is no God. He certainly can't prove it. For all his protestations about science showing there is no God, there is no such proof. Science doesn't even have the proper categories to prove the non-existence of a spiritual being. The naturalist approach demands more of science than it can produce.

If honest, the naturalist would admit that his or her system is built on faith, not scientific or philosophical necessity or certainty.

All of that to make the point that, if we're honest, there is a faith component to belief in God and to unbelief.

There is a faith component to believing in the resurrection AND TO NOT believing in the resurrection.

At least the biblical account gives a plausible and consistent explanation for what transformed the early disciples from fearful followers to world changing witnesses (martyrs).

"But if we admit God, must we admit Miracle? Indeed, you have no security against it. That is the bargain....Admit God and with Him the risk of a few miracles." Lewis, Miracles

The second view is "This is too good to be true" kind of doubt. THAT IS THE doubt that we find identified even in the believer's heart.

Scripture and history give us numerous reasons that the Resurrection is true.

#1 The Gospels attest to the resurrection and there has been NO valid renunciation of the reality of the resurrection, except by those who simply claim "It's impossible." We just dealt with that.

#2 Jesus predicted it and announced it -

There are eight verses that indicated in some way what was to happen to Him. Mat 16:21 is a great example

From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

Other are Mat 12:40; , 10:302-34, 14:27, Luke 9:30-31; Jn 2:19-22; Jn 10:14-18,

#3 Jesus manifested resurrection power as he brought people back to life.

Widow of Nain Luke 7

Jairus' daughter Luke 8

Lazarus Jn 11 After that incident we hear the great proclamation from Jesus, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

#4 There is NO compelling motivation for the disciples to lie

Threat of being totally cut off from family

Lies are hard to contain

Why would they intentionally lie in the face of certain opposition from Rome and the Religious leaders, especially having just seen what happens to those who stir up trouble. Jesus was beaten and crucified for his claims to be the Son of God. What would the disciples assume would happen to them if they spread that same message about Jesus.

How many of you have seen someone scourged and crucified?

How about whipped 20 times? 10 times?

How many people who saw that would think, "I'm going to take a stand for that guy even if I get the same treatment, even if I know the claims about him are FALSE?"

What would it take for someone to do that?

I dare say that it would take some sort of miraculous event that simply change the whole paradigm of life....like a resurrection from the dead.

#5 Historical resources support the Gospel narratives

Evidence that Demands a Verdict

There is sufficient historical evidence to demand an honest consideration of the Resurrection. Even if you aren't convinced you should seriously consider the most significant event in the life of the man whose life is the center piece of our calendar system.

#6 There is no other valid way of explaining the changed lives of his disciples or of previous non-believers.

If something so life changing happened, why don't we know about it?

Saul of Tarsus is a great example and all the believers in the room are others.

#7 The suffering and Resurrection of Christ is the only thing that makes sense of suffering.

The resurrection points to the existence of God and without a personal God who knows us and cares for us, suffering has no meaning. In fact, we can't really even call it suffering. It's just stuff that happens. If we're just a cosmic accident, then joy and sorrow are just social constructs. Being happy, fulfilled, and authentic is no better than being a hateful, violent, crook. If there's no God then, "It is what it is and stop complaining."

Apart from the suffering of Christ, God in the flesh, then there is no redeeming value in our suffering. In Christ, God entered our mess and our pain, and he took our diseases, shame, and death.

Because of the resurrection, Paul can say, "I don't consider that the sufferings of this present time are WORTHY to be compared to the glory that is to be revealed to us." Rom 8

It can only be revealed to us if we have eternal life through the Resurrected Christ. His resurrection is the guarantee of life for those united to Him by faith.

If so, how should we live and pray?

VoV VICTORY

"Bathe my soul in rich consolations of Thy resurrection life"

What are those consolations?

Ep;h 1: Resurrection power in our lives!!

17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.

These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

The hope of our calling, the riches of the glory of our inheritance, and the surpassing greatness of His power toward us.

We need those because they put everything else in perspective.

Do we need to pray for “our daily bread” and should we “let our requests be made known to God”? Yes
Should we cast our cares upon the Lord because He cares for us? YES

But above and beyond the typical prayer list items, we need to pray this way because in doing so we do bathe our souls in the rich consolations of the Resurrection.

Those consolations give us the spiritual capital we need to face whatever comes our way.

Does your heart need to bathe in some sort of consolation?

It won't be found in the temporal secular values and worldview of this passing world.

We need consolation that brings real forgiveness, real hope, real glory, and real RESURRECTION power.

That consolation is ONLY offered and guaranteed because of the reality of the Resurrection of Christ.

If there is no resurrection then it's all a waste of time, so “Eat, drink, and be Merry for tomorrow you die.”

If the Resurrection weren't true, we should STILL WANT IT TO BE simply because a worldview built on the truth of the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Christ leads to more human flourishing than any other worldview.

Friends, we don't have to close our eyes and wishfully chant, “I do believe in the resurrection, I do believe in the resurrection,…”

NO, we can open our eyes and examine the historical record and have confidence that what was proclaimed 2000 years ago is TRUE.

HE IS RISEN!

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