

# Christian Fundamentals

## Resurrection

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is probably the most important event in human history, as it alone provides the possibility of eternal life. Most human beings live without any hope as to what will happen to them when they die, and in many ways live all their lives subject to the fear of death. They are described by Paul the apostle in his letter to the Ephesian church as 'without God and without hope in this world'. The resurrection of Jesus Christ means that a human being has made a way through death unto life and provides a way for all who will believe on Him and receive Him into their lives. 'Jesus, the way, the truth and the life'. He provides a salvation for all who will come to Him, and gives them eternal life, 'The wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ' (Romans 6.23)

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus had to be real, it had to be a bodily resurrection, as the resurrection had to be of a human being on the earth to demonstrate the power of God over death in a human body. 'Since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection from the dead' (1 Corinthians 15.21) We have looked at the virgin birth in our series of basic Christian teaching, and to the 'second Adam,' Jesus Christ. He was a life-giving Spirit having being born without sin, and therefore able to live a holy life and offer Himself a perfect sacrifice to God, without spot or blemish. We have seen Jesus' death as being that perfect offering, so that on Him God could put all the sins of the whole world, that Jesus could overcome the sin and die such a death that it was 'impossible for death to hold on to Him'. As death could not hold on to our Lord Jesus, we find the possibility of the bodily resurrection of this wonderful human being, who had become obedient unto the death of the cross, and the reality that it actually took place. Jesus was raised from the dead by the 'glory of the Father' (Romans 6.4). Romans 3.23 tells us that 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God', but such was the righteousness of our Lord Jesus that, rather than coming short of the glory of God, it was indeed the glory of God which raised Jesus from the dead. This fulfils Jesus' prayer request that the 'Father would glorify Him with His own self'. Wonderful truth: it is all of, and to, the glory of God.

The resurrection was real, and the Bible sets out evidence for the event; perhaps in those days the simple statement of fact and the eye witness evidence was enough. The men who saw Jesus raised from the dead were straightforward human beings and probably had never anticipated the attempts of scholars in modern times to try and deny what took place. Their lives too had been transformed by the coming of the Holy Spirit and they knew Jesus was alive and raised up and Lord of all.

John tells us 'What we heard, what we saw, what we looked on and what our hands have handled, that we declare to you'. There are some great books written which go into great detail as to the evidence of the resurrection; it is not the intention of this brief teaching to do that. 'Who moved the stone,' by Frank Morrison, and/or the 'Evidence for the resurrection,' by Lee Strobl are books which can be read to delve deeper into the facts. For now, we will take Luke's word for it, as writer of the Acts of the Apostles. Luke wrote this, 'To whom He showed Himself alive after His passion (Greek word is 'pascho' which means suffering) by

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many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God'. Infallible proofs, that is the word. From Jesus' appearance at Lake Galilee when the disciples caught 156 fish, "It is the Lord!", to His appearance to Thomas, "Behold my hands and my feet and put your hand in my side", to the appearance to Cleopas and his friend on the road to Emmaus, "Did not our hearts burn within us?" and 'He was known to them in the breaking of bread', we see the infallible and yet simple eye witness evidence from those who saw Jesus alive after His death. At Lake Galilee the disciples' "It is the Lord!" is so spontaneous and yet so normal, as Jesus repeats the miracle of allowing the disciples to catch many fish. The same Jesus, one miracle before His death and one after His resurrection. (Read Luke chapter 5 and John chapter 21). They provide for the straightforward the evidence required.

The theme of the preaching in the 'Acts of the Apostles' is resurrection. The resurrection is that which declares Jesus to be truly the Son of God. *'Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made 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'.* (Romans:1, vs 3 and 4)

We find the resurrection in the preaching in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost, 'God raised Him from the dead'. It is in Acts 3 after the healing of the man at the Beautiful Gate. Paul preaches resurrection in Athens, and before the Pharisees in Jerusalem, and then in Paul's appearances before Felix and Festus. It is everywhere. Paul, at the beginning of 1 Corinthians chapter 15, set out his own list of the appearances of the Lord Jesus of which he was aware. The conclusion in this same chapter, 'Now is Christ risen'.

We can track back into the Old Testament and find resurrection and the promise of it in many places. The obvious one is the passage Peter quotes from Psalm 16 on the day of Pentecost, *'It was not possible for death to hold Him. You will not leave my soul in hell or let your holy one see corruption, in your presence is fullness of joy and at your right hand are pleasures for evermore'.*

We can also see in Isaiah 53, *'He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied'.* The travail of Jesus' soul was on the cross through death, and for Him to see the results He must be alive from the dead. We read in psalm 118, *'The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner'.* The rejection of Jesus lead to His death, to His crucifixion, but for Him to become 'the head of the corner', the cornerstone on which all of the kingdom of God is established, He must be alive from the dead to assume all authority and power. *'Lift up you gates be lifted up you everlasting doors and the King of Glory shall enter in'* (Psalm 24). Jesus entered into heaven having overcome death. He did not sin *"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that has clean hands, and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully"*. The King of Glory enters in. This was all promised hundreds of years before it took place on the earth and in heaven, and yet was in the plan of God, who sees the end from the beginning, to bring salvation to His people, those who will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ

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We find a huge amount of infallible proof in both New and Old Testaments, which all confirms the words of Peter in the first chapter of his first letter. 'The Spirit of Christ which was in them (the prophets) did signify beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow' (verse 11). Finally, we have Jesus' own words, '*Destroy this temple (His body) and in 3 days I will raise it again*', *this He spoke of His resurrection* and *"I lay my body down that I may take it again, I lay it down of myself, no one takes it from me, I have power(authority) to lay it down and power (authority) to take it up again. This commandment have I received of my Father"*. Jesus, the faithful and true witness on the earth. His disciples did not understand. Resurrection was outside of their thinking, but not the mind of Christ who had heard the word of faith from His Father. *"This commandment have I received of my Father"*.

To the straightforward heart and mind the evidence is impressive. The challenge is that if Jesus has been raised from the dead, He is Lord, and if that is the case what do people do in response? Do they/we yield all to Him and confess our sins, ask for forgiveness and own Him as Lord, or reject His grace and harden our hearts, thinking we know better than God? Those who deny the resurrection do so thinking that they do know better, so that in this world they can do that which is right in their own eyes. They approach the issue with their own agenda, having made up their minds, and come with what the Bible describes as 'An evil heart of unbelief'.

Paul the apostle, writing in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 says, *"If Christ is not risen, we are still in our sins, those who preach the resurrection are false witnesses of God because they say, 'God raised Jesus from the dead' "*. He also says, *"If in this world only we have hope in Christ we are of all human beings most miserable, most to be pitied"*. That is true, but Paul declares, *"Now is Christ risen, He is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep (died), and we shall be also at His coming"*. Peter says, *"We are begotten again (born again) to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, into an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled which fades not away (does not slowly disappear but remains permanent) reserved in heaven for you"*. Peter goes on to say that *"Our faith, when tried, shall be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing (apocalypse) of Jesus Christ"*. Of course, no resurrection then no second coming, but *"Jesus will return a second time without sin unto salvation"* and *'Why stand you gazing into heaven? This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall return in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven"*.

There is so much to prove this wonderful work of God. Paul speaking to King Agrippa says, *"Why should it be thought an incredible thing with you that God should raise the dead"*.

NOW IS CHRIST RISEN and we move on to see what that means for every life, and in particular those who receive the Lord Jesus, because the outcome of the resurrection is still more remarkable and wonderful. We read in Ephesians chapter 2, *'And even when we were dead in sins, has God (a God who is rich in mercy with the great love wherewith He has loved us) made us alive together with Christ (by grace you are saved) and raised us up together and made us sit together in Christ, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus"*. We see that when Jesus was raised from

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the dead, we were with Him in His resurrection (Romans 6. 5), and we were raised up together with Jesus and seated together with Him. It is wonderful and the wisdom of God. Jesus took our flesh and blood, He died in our place, He took our sin and when we were dead in those sins He has made us alive in Him. He has raised us up together with Him and seated us together with Him. Such is the power of the resurrection that, ultimately, when Jesus returns, death cannot hold us either. We have total togetherness with Our Lord Jesus; even in this life are we made alive spiritually in Our Lord Jesus that we may live unto Him. This all took place in Jesus' resurrection; it is totally dependent on His resurrection but becomes ours when we receive Him. We find ourselves in Him and therefore raised up in Him to walk in the newness of life into which we have been made alive. That is why Paul the apostle wanted 'to be found in Christ' that he would know the power of Jesus' resurrection. He was prepared, and did so, to give up everything else for this eternal life.

So, we find ourselves in Christ and in His resurrection. What is the effect in our lives on the earth? We have read that if we are with Jesus in His death we are also in His resurrection. We are in Jesus' life, and it is the power of that life which Paul the apostle wanted to know in his own life. It must make a huge difference in a life to have the risen Lord Jesus in that life. We look at Romans chapter 6 again for help to understand the truth of our freedom. *"Knowing this that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed (rendered inactive) that henceforth (from this time forward) we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ we believe that we shall also live with Him. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more, death has no more dominion (authority, domination) over Him. For in that He died unto sin he died unto sin once. But in that He lives, He lives unto God. Likewise (in the same way) **reckon** you yourselves indeed to be dead unto sin but alive unto God through our Lord Jesus Christ".* We are alive unto God, we are raised up from the spiritual death, taken from under the power of sin in which we lived, and having been raised up we live unto God. God Himself is the whole direction and purpose of our lives. We are then told 'not to let sin reign over our mortal bodies, but to yield ourselves to God..... as those who are alive from the dead. 2 Corinthians chapter 5 tells us *"That we live unto Him who is raised from the dead"* and to do that we must be in 'resurrection life'.

We used the word 'reckon' earlier (in bold type). The word comes from the Greek word from which we derive the English word 'logic'. Here is the spiritual logic, the reasoning of faith which we are to use and apply to our situation. If Jesus died and I died with Him, I was joined with Him in His death, therefore I must be in His resurrection now He is raised from the dead. If he died and rose again, it was once for all, and if I am in Him my death and resurrection is in Him and is once for all too. If He now lives unto God, I am able to live unto God through Him. The direction of my life is towards God, not towards sin, self and this world. That is the logic. It is all plainly spiritually sensible. What I live is through our Lord Jesus Christ and totally based on all He has done for me. I have done nothing myself; 'it is not I but Christ', it is all of grace, and yet it is all of faith that it may be by grace. The logic of faith in our Lord Jesus takes me to this freedom to walk in newness of life and bring forth fruit unto holiness, and the end, the outcome, is everlasting life. We live now in eternal life, in the life of God, as

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those that are raised from the dead in Our Lord Jesus. We prove the power of His cross, we prove the power of His resurrection, and glorify God in our lives. The 'just shall live by faith', and we honour God in our daily lives as we practically put into operation all that was achieved in the death, and in the resurrection, of our Lord Jesus.

This is all very wonderful, but it gets better, as God is able, because of the resurrection, to work life into what the Bible calls our mortal bodies. Bodies, natural bodies are mortal. That means one day they will die. Our souls will depart and our bodies, even though, to quote psalm 139, they are 'fearfully (amazingly) and wonderfully made,' will cease to function, the life will go out of them and all that is left will return to the earth from which human beings were made. *"Ashes to ashes, dust to dust"*. It is what happens in the meantime which determines the quality of life in which a Christian can and should live, which will and must make his or her life different from the rest of the world. It is not that we particularly look any different on the outside, although the warmth of a smile and the gentle radiance of a holy life can be evident. It is the life which operates in the mortal body which makes the difference, and the Spirit from which that life comes.

We read these words in Romans chapter 8, *"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken (bring life to) your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you"*. So, if Christ is in us, we know that our bodies are dead, not literally as we are alive, but that there is no eternal life in them. The 'wages of sin is death' and all find the outworking of that death in them as they age, and things no longer function as they once did; eventually death comes to that body. However, for the Christian, the spirit in them is life, not just that it is alive but it is very life itself. The 'gift of God is eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ'. The Spirit which dwells in the Christian is the same one which raised Jesus from the dead, We were raised together with Him. That spirit is all about resurrection, life after death, life where there has once been death. The Spirit which raised Jesus from the dead brings life into our mortal bodies, brings the power of Jesus' resurrection in to the body so it can walk in newness of life, finding life continually renewed within that body as we walk in fellowship with the Lord Jesus. It means that life, the life of God, is operating in every part of our lives, body, soul and spirit, and we can then glorify God in our body and our spirit which is the Lord's. We are restored to glory, and whereas death reigned in us, grace reigns in our lives as 'the life which we now live in the flesh we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us'. It is *"Not I but Christ"*. This is the secret of living unto 'Him that is raised from the dead,' and why Paul wanted to be in that righteousness so that the power of the resurrection would work in His life. It is for all Christians and then enables them to fellowship in Jesus' sufferings, laying down their lives for the glory of God, and then be conformable to Jesus' death in the day they die. They come to the place of death with 'clean hands and a pure heart, and not having told lies or lifted up their souls to vain things'. They come humbly in obedience to God to the end and attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Resurrection is always there. The last enemy to be overcome is death, and so the results in our bodies are overcome when Jesus comes, and 'we see Him as He is' and are changed into His perfect likeness.

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In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul comes to the question, *"But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? And in what body do they come?"*. He then provides the answer.

*So also, is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so, it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening (life giving) spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

It is in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. It is so fast when Jesus comes. *"Those who believe in me shall not see death,"* Jesus says. There will be no time to see and contemplate corruption, death, or hell. Our bodies will be changed. What is mortal, i.e., it will die, puts on immortality, so no more death. What is corrupt, puts on incorruption so as to be part of the inheritance reserved in heaven for us. That which is natural, becomes that which is spiritual. We receive a new body, like Jesus' glorious body, in which the glory of God can be fully manifest. Human beings who fell short of the glory of God because of sin, having received the Lord Jesus, now find the glory of God fulfilled even in their new bodies. 'The dead shall be raised incorruptible', all because God raised Jesus from the dead. All our hopes and future are because of this resurrection. That is why resurrection is so vitally important. No resurrection, no hope: with the resurrection, 'death', the last enemy, is swallowed up in victory. The grave no longer has any sting, death is swallowed up in victory. Eternal life is what remains for all who truly belong to Jesus.

*Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, whom He raised from the dead, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He (Jesus Christ) might have the preeminence". Amen*