

The Resurrection of Jesus

This is the central event of Christianity, and all four gospels record it. On the third day after his death, Jesus' followers visited an empty tomb to be told that he was risen from the dead. The positive proof was given in personal interviews, when they ate with him, spoke with him and could touch him.

Forty days later the apostles saw him taken into heaven and were told by angels that *"This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven"* (Acts 1:11).

From that day until now, men and women who believe in the truth of this message have looked for the return of Jesus to the earth.



He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8).

For this reason, God restored his life. Ten days after Jesus went to heaven, Peter said this of him: *Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it (Acts 2:24).*

Jesus' resurrection differs from all others. They were raised, but eventually would die again. Jesus rose, never to die. Paul wrote:

Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over him (Romans 6:9).

A Different Resurrection

The resurrection of Jesus differed from any other restoration to life. He himself had used the power of God to give life to the dead: to the widow's son at Nain, to the daughter of Jairus and to Lazarus at Bethany. These miracles, recorded in the gospels, were evidence of the truth of his message.

But the resurrection of Jesus was the work of God alone, and it was a consequence of the sinless life that Jesus had lived. He had dedicated his life to serving his Father, and had pleased Him in everything he did. The Apostle Paul recounts this for us:

He has the power of an endless life. He alone can say: *"I am he who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore"* (Revelation 1:18).

The Pattern for Eternal Life

In Jesus we see illustrated the method by which death is overcome. This is obscured by the non-biblical idea of an 'immortal soul' - the teaching that humans already have a life force which survives death in a non-bodily form in some other world. We would search in vain for this in the teaching of Jesus, and indeed all of the books of the Bible. This idea is simply not there.

The Bible teaches that God offers a future life through recreating someone's physical existence by raising them from the dead. Jesus declared: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6). In him we see how death is overcome.

He confidently expected to be raised from the dead, and foretold his resurrection on several occasions, although at the time his hearers did not understand. His words took on their full significance after these men and women were given irrefutable evidence that Jesus was alive again.

Teaching About Resurrection

Jesus made it very clear that his mission was to open up to men and women the prospect of eternal life. The verses in this section are all from the Gospel of John, but we find the same message in each gospel.

I am the bread of life (John 6:35).

You are not willing to come to me that you may have life (John 5:40).

Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life (John 4:14).

Did he explain how that life would be given? The answer is as clear as we could wish. Jesus said he would raise from death and give everlasting life to those who believe in him:

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in Him who sent me has everlasting life... Do not marvel at this; for the hour is

coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation (John 5:24, 28–29).

This is the will of the Father who sent me, that of all He has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day (John 6:39).

In three other verses in this chapter (John 6), Jesus spoke of that resurrection as being at the 'last day', or the time when he returns to the earth:

And this is the will of Him who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day (v40).

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me (v44–45).

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood [that is, follows Jesus' commands to associate with his sacrifice] has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day (v54).

On another occasion Jesus made this direct connection between the resurrection and the 'last day'. To Martha, a bereaved sister of Lazarus he said:

"Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in

me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world" (John 11:23-27).

Martha's answer was comprehensive; it was a statement of faith that recognized Jesus as Israel's Messiah (the Christ) and the Son of God whose coming had been foretold. There was also a direct connection made between the Messiahship of Jesus and this last day.

Jesus as Judge

An important point here is that the resurrected Jesus is God's appointed Judge of humankind. This is evident from a number of the scriptures already quoted. At that 'last day' in the future, people will be turned away by him, or accepted by him. Some will be raised to everlasting life, and some to shame; and Jesus himself will determine their destiny.

For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son (John 5:22).



For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man (John 5:26-27).

During his life on earth Jesus was holy in everything he did, despite the fact that he shared our human weakness. This means that he is uniquely qualified to be the judge of mankind. His judgment will be perfect, for it will be by divine standards, for he is the Son of God. His judgment will be righteous, for he has laid down his life to save sinners, and those rejected by him will have rejected his help to save them from sin.

Jesus the judge is able to evaluate people's deeds with unerring faithfulness to God's truth. Life proves to us that people are usually extremely poor at judging their fellow humans, being able to assess correctly the complexities of motives in conduct. It requires divine power and discernment to determine people's destiny with justice.

What Jesus has done in the past is the foundation for his future work. The sinless man who died for us is the one fit to judge us.

The apostle Paul, preaching in Athens, made it clear that the resurrection of Jesus is God's guarantee of Jesus' position, and that he will return to judge the world.

[God] has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead (Acts 17:31).

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