

Jesus Is Risen (I Cor 15.12-28)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. At the center of the Christian faith is a remarkable and earth-shattering claim: *Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and is exalted as the Lord over all creation.*
- B. What happened in a tomb outside of Jerusalem early Easter morning nearly two-thousand years ago has cosmic and eternal significance for every single human being who has ever lived.
- C. The message of Easter (and the message we proclaim each week) is not a general message of human hope or a sentimental message intended to inspire us — but rather, it is nothing less than the message that God has acted to fulfill his purposes, provide a way of salvation for mankind, and to vindicate his Son Jesus Christ (his person, his teaching, his life, his ministry, and his death) for all times.
- D. If this is true, then it necessitates that this event and its significance reorients the whole of our lives. If it is true, it means that God's kingdom has broken into this world, and that God's new creational reality has invaded our world and changed everything. It means that everything about Jesus of Nazareth, all he did, and all he taught was the full, perfect, and entire truth of God himself. Therefore, all of our lives must be reoriented toward this, and that nothing else but Christ crucified and risen matters.

II. CHRISTIANITY HINGES ON THE RESURRECTION

- A. Paul declares in this passage that the reality of the resurrection is at the *heart of the Christian faith.*

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures (I Cor 15.3-4)

¹⁴And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, who he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised (I Cor 15.14-15)
- B. Throughout the New Testament, we cannot separate the message of salvation purchased through the cross from the message of the resurrection. For the death of Jesus to be good news it *requires* that Jesus be raised from the dead.
- C. It is the death of Jesus that pays the ransom price for our salvation and atones for the forgiveness of sin — but it is the resurrection that *vindicates* and *validates* the person and work of Jesus.
- D. Jesus declared himself to be the glorious Son of Man and the eternal Son of God throughout his ministry, but it is the resurrection that *demonstrates* him as the Son of God for all to see.

³concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh, ⁴and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 1.3-4)
- E. In his life and ministry, Jesus took the form of a servant, humbling himself in obedience to the will of the Father even to the point of death. Now, the resurrection vindicates him and his work and God says “Yes, and Amen” to all of his promises in him — exalting him as Lord over all creation.

⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2.6-11)

- F. We are invited to see that if Jesus is not raised from the dead, he is nothing more than a failed prophet. He would have been nothing more than a man proclaiming the dawning of a new age of God's redemptive purposes but who was crushed by the forces of evil and the powers of this world.
- G. Yet, through the resurrection, the reality of Jesus' life, teaching, ministry, and death is *shown* for all time to be the only way, the only truth, and the only life.
- H. The resurrection is the grand demonstration of the Father that he has received Jesus' work, accepted it, and has set him to be the beginning of the new creation reality.

¹⁸And he is... the firstborn from the dead (Col 1.18)

²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ (1 Cor 15.20-23)

- I. The only way that we know for certain that the death of Jesus has any power over sin, any effectiveness in forgiving us of our eternal debt, and payment for the wrath of God we deserved, any certainty of his victory over principalities and powers, or any confidence that one day death will be swallowed up in victory is because ***God has raised him from the dead.***
- J. Because of this, we must see the reality of the resurrection as ***central to the truth of the gospel.*** Without the resurrection, Paul declares that our hope is in vain and we are to be pitied above all men.

¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. (1 Cor 15.17-19)

III. THE RESURRECTION AS HISTORICAL FACT

- A. The second truth we must hold related to the resurrection is the reality that it is a ***historical fact.***

⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive... ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared to me. (1 Cor 15.5-8)

²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead (1 Cor 15.20)

- B. To the writers of the New Testament, the resurrection was not religious sentiment. It was not a 'spiritualized' message intended to signify embodying hope in a dark world. It was not something that they created or fabricated in order to warm the hearts of the distraught disciples who's hopes had been dashed at the death of their leader.
- C. Although the context surrounding the New Testament more readily believed in the supernatural — the idea of a singular (i.e., one man) resurrection was offensive to *every worldview* at the time. Most ancient cultures would not have believed in the resurrection; and within the Jewish worldview, it was not expected that the Messiah would come, die, and be raised again as an individual before the final work of cosmic redemption that was brought about by God's power.
- D. Because of this, the early Christians were explicit in utilizing many devices to confirm and emphasize the ***historical reality*** of Jesus' resurrection.
 - 1. ***Historical evidence:*** the New Testament writers regularly speak of the resurrection as a historical reality, and emphasize the circumstantial and physical elements surround it.

³⁶As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them... ³⁷But they... thought they saw a spirit. ³⁸And he said to them... ³⁹See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." ⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet... ⁴¹he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate before them. (Luke 24.36-42)

²⁸And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. ²⁹And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰But God raised him from the dead, (Acts 13.28-30)

2. ***Eyewitness accounts:*** the reality that Jesus appeared to *many* eyewitnesses is used by the New Testament authors time and again to demonstrate the historicity of the resurrection.

³He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. (Acts 1.3)

³¹and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. (Acts 13.31)

¹³That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus... ¹⁴and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding?"... ¹⁸Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him (Luke 24.13-17)

3. ***Testimony of and appearance to women:*** one way that the New Testament accounts of the resurrection can be understood as relaying the historical reality (as opposed to a fabricated story) is the fact that Jesus first appeared to women. In the ancient world, the testimony of a woman was not acceptable in a legal situation. Jesus' appearance to women first would not have been how a fabricated story was presented — rather, it demonstrates a faithful retelling of what really happened.

⁵But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." ⁸So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. (Matt 28.5-9)

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb... ¹⁴ she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her. (John 20.11-19)

4. ***The presence of doubt among the disciples:*** the evidence of doubt in several of the disciples *after* the resurrection points to another proof of the historical reality of the resurrection.

¹⁶Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. (Matt 28.16-17)

²⁴Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." (John 20.24-25)

- E. This matters eternally and cosmically, because if Christ did not rise, than nothing else essentially matters. This is not simply a spiritual reality — but a historic reality that must be *responded to* with faith and a spirit of submitted obedience.

IV. THE RESURRECTION AS A GUARANTEE

- A. In this passage, Paul invites us to see that the resurrection *functions as a guarantee within the purposes and plans of God*. Understanding this is intended to fill us with faith and hope in the glorious certainty of God's eternal purposes unfolding — regardless of what *appears to be true* as we walk through this world.
- B. The resurrection is a *guarantee of a future resurrection*. Paul demonstrates that Jesus' resurrection is the firstfruits of a greater resurrection of all those who belong to him. This reality shows that all who are in Christ will one day be raised again to life eternal. We will be given physical bodies as Jesus has been raised with a physical body. We will dwell on the earth with him, restored to a place of communion with him and partnership with his purposes.

²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. (I Cor 15.20-23)

⁵¹Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. (I Cor 15.51-53)

²And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (Dan 12.2)

- C. The resurrection is a *guarantee of cosmic redemption*. Paul shows that Jesus' resurrection places him as Lord and King over all the earth. Although we await the time of full consummation, the resurrection (and ascension) of Jesus is a guarantee that there will be a day when all things will be put under his feet. His victory over sin, death, and hell will one day be ultimately realized as God's purposes of cosmic redemption fill the whole earth.

²⁴Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death. (I Cor 15.24-26)

⁵⁴When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (I Cor 15.54-57)

⁵And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." (Rev 21.5)

- D. The resurrection is a *guarantee of God's power at work in his church*. Paul specifically relates the time in-between Christ's comings as being a time where the church is to grow in understanding and experiencing the power of God that *raised Christ from the dead*. The church is joined to Christ as a body is joined to the head, and the resurrection life of the head is intended to be experienced *now* (in part) by the body throughout our time in the earth.

¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (Eph 1.19-23)

⁹For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. (Col 2.9-12)