

## The Resurrection of Christ: Theological Implications

Each of Jesus' sayings from the cross was a fulfillment of prophecy. **FIRST** He cried, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,*" and *this fulfilled Isaiah 53:12* which states the He would "make intercession for the transgressors." **SECOND**, He promised the thief, "*Today thou shalt be with Me in paradise,*" and *this was a fulfillment of the prophecy of the angel to Joseph* when he said, "thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). **THIRD**, to His mother He said, "*Woman, behold thy Son,*" and *this fulfilled the prophecy of Simeon* from Luke 2:35 which says, "A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." **FOURTH**, He asked, "*My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" *which were the very same words from Psalm 22:1.* **FIFTH**, he cried out, "*I thirst,*" *which is fulfillment of Psalm 69:21.* **SIXTHLY**, Jesus shouted that, "*It is finished.*" *These words came to pass from Psalm 22:31.* And **SEVENTH** He prayed, "*Father, into Thy hand, I commend My spirit,*" *which is written in Psalm 31.*

Because of the physical taxing on His body due to being crucified, speaking was very difficult to say the least. But our Savior was able to draw from unseen power to speak these last few words which I found have so much meaning. Though His physical work on the cross was more than enough to set us free, He gave us the verbal confirmation of what He had already set in place, namely the saving of our souls.

**"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up His spirit"** (Luke 23:46). This final plea is one of contentment. For more than twelve hours Jesus had been in the hands of men. How they treated Him is well documented. He had the power and authority to strike them all down but He chose to place himself in the hands of sinners. Voluntarily He placed Himself in the hands of sinners and now, voluntarily, He delivers His spirit into the hands of the Father. Never again will He be in the hands of men. Never again at the mercy of the wicked. Yet it was by these last words that He also declared He would rise up again, for He had earlier told them; **Joh 10:18** *No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.*

### Significance of the Resurrection of Christ

I'm just going to touch on a few points. No one can do an exhaustive treatment of this great theme. We will never be able to plumb the depths of what Christ's death and resurrection mean for us, but in the least we can offer a few key points. This is a simple, straightforward message. There's really nothing fancy about it. For the most part, I'll just read the biblical text and trust the Holy Spirit to stir up your hearts. If you have not put your faith in Christ, now is certainly an appropriate time to do so.

#### (1) The Ultimate Apologetic: Validation of the Miracles of the Bible

George Eldon Ladd, in his *A Theology of the New Testament* (p. 354) states: "God did not make himself known through a system of teaching nor a theology nor a book, but through a series of events recorded in the Bible. The coming of Jesus of Nazareth was the climax of this series of redemptive events; and his resurrection is the event that validates all that came before."

The Bible speaks of creation as virtually the finger-painting of God, while the resurrection of Christ required the strong arm of God! It is his mighty work! In other words, the resurrection of Christ implicitly contains an argument from the greater to the lesser. If we can embrace this miracle, what is to prevent us from embracing lesser ones?

#### (2) Proof that God is the God of the Living and is a Living God (cf. Matt 22:32; Luke 20:38; Rom 1:4; 6:9; 1 Cor 15:20-26, 54-57)

Several texts prove this point, but none so eloquently as 1 Cor 15:20-26:

- (20) ¶ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.
  - (21) For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.
  - (22) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.
  - (23) But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.
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(24) Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

(25) For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

(26) The last enemy to be destroyed is death. (RSV)

As Ladd pointed out (p. 354): “If Christ is not risen from the dead, the long course of God’s redemptive acts to save his people ends in a dead-end street, in a tomb. If the resurrection of Christ is not reality, then we have no assurance that God is the *living* God, for death has the last word. Faith is futile because the object of that faith has not vindicated himself as the Lord of life. Christian faith is then incarcerated in the tomb along with the final and highest self-revelation of God in Christ--if Christ is indeed dead.”

But if Christ is raised from the dead, then God is sovereign over all things, even death.

### (3) Fulfillment of Jesus’ Predictions and of Scripture (cf. Matt 17:9; Luke 24:46; John 2:22; 20:9; 1 Cor 15:4)

Again, several texts point in this direction. Note two in particular: John 2:22; 1 Cor 15:4:

John 2:22 “When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.” (RSV)

1Cor. 15:4 “that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures” (RSV)

Thus, if Christ is not raised from the dead, he is a liar. And if he is a liar, then his death did not pay for our sins.

### (4) An Essential Part of the Gospel (cf. John 11:25, 26; Acts 1:22; 2:31; 3:15; 4:2, 10, 33; 13:30, 34; 17:3; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 15:4; 2 Tim 2:8)

We have seen some of the passages in Acts. Note now two other texts: John 11:25 and Rom 10:9:

John 11:25 “Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.” (RSV)

Rom. 10:9 because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (RSV)

### (5) Implicit Demonstration of Christ’s Deity (John 2:19-22)

The resurrection of Christ is unique in two major ways:

- All others who were raised from the dead returned to their graves (e.g., Lazarus, Jairus’ daughter, Eutychus);
- Christ’s is the only resurrection to take place without a human agent.

Also, note who participated in Christ’s resurrection: the Father (Gal 1:1), Holy Spirit (Rom 8:11), and the Son (John 2:19-22).

Clearly, if Christ raised himself from the dead, he must be more than a man! His resurrection without human agency is an implicit affirmation of his deity.

### (6) Guarantee of Believers’ Resurrection (cf. Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:12-14, 20; Col 1:18; 1 Pet 1:3; Rev 1:5)

Again, note a few key texts: 1 Cor 15:12-14; Col 1:18 (“firstborn from the dead” does not mean chronologically first, but in terms of preeminence--cf. 1:15).

### (7) Balanced Perspective on the Spiritual Status of the Human Body (Rom 8:23; 1 Cor 6:13-20; 15:32-34; 2 Tim 2:18)

The *bodily* resurrection of Christ speaks volumes about the spiritual status of the body: it is not inherently evil, with the mind being inherently good. Both were created good by God; both were corrupted in the fall of man. The ancient gnostics felt that only the mind was good. Some Christians have adopted this stance and have taken on an ascetic lifestyle, trying to deny the body its natural functions and pleasures. Others are hedonists: they believe the body is bad, but decide: “Why fight it?”

But if our bodies will be raised from the dead, as Christ’s was, then our bodies will be fully redeemed. And if they will be redeemed, then there is something salvagable about them. . . . Not only this, but they can be dedicated to God and used for his glory NOW! (Rom 12:1--“Present your *bodies* as a living sacrifice which is acceptable to God”). (But the fact that they *need* to be redeemed means that they are utterly sinful.)

Note 2 Tim 2:18, which condemns those who embrace other than a bodily, future resurrection of the saints. Note also Rom 8:22-23 (“We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” [RSV]).

**(8) The Indwelling of the Spirit and Resurrection Power** (John 14:17; Acts 2:38; Rom 6:4; 8:11-14; Eph 1:13-14, 20; Phil 3:10-16)

The Spirit was promised to those who put their trust in Christ. It is vital for us to understand that apart from the Spirit in our lives we would not believe. He seals us to God and grants us the power necessary for sanctification.

**(9) Forgiveness of Sins** (John 19:30; Acts 2:32-38; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 15:3-4, 17)

Note especially John 19:30. Jesus' cry from the cross is "It is finished." This the Greek word *tetelestai*. This word was used in commerce at the time. It was often written across a bill to indicate that the bill was *paid in full*. The resurrection is the receipt that God gave humanity that Jesus' death did, indeed, pay the full price of our sins. (The world's sins are not enough to keep Christ in the grave! His resurrection is proof that our sins are forgiven!)

Two points: First, forgiveness was costly (the cross), but because of the resurrection, there should not be lingering guilt for sin. If God slew his own son and *kept* him in the grave, every time we sinned the guilt would be too much! We'd say, "It's because of sins like this that Jesus is no longer with us!"

But the resurrection means that no sin is so heinous that we cannot forgive ourselves. Some of you have done some pretty foul things in your time. The empty tomb means that they're forgotten and forgiven!

Second, you have no right to withhold forgiveness from someone else. You need to forgive your spouse, your friend, your boss, your neighbor, and even your enemies. If God in Christ has forgiven all people, for me to withhold forgiveness says that I am more righteous than God! And it's to say that Christ's death was not adequate. Friends, that's blasphemy. You've got to let it go! You've got to forgive that person his pocket change because God has forgiven you your millions!

To sum up: life, relationship, forgiveness, sanctification, the future, sanctity of the body. A whole philosophy, an entire world view, is wrapped up in the resurrection of Christ. Act as if your life depends on the resurrection of Christ--because it does!

He is risen! He is risen! That is the best news we can possibly tell a dying world!

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