

***Question: Is it necessary to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ in order to be a Christian?***

To believe that a man actually died and came back to life is pretty incredible, even if he does claim to be the Son of God. For some it is easier to believe in Jesus only as a good and wise man who was the greatest teacher who ever lived. However, if Jesus was not what he claimed, he was a liar and the greatest deceiver the world has ever known. It would be incredible to believe that a lying deceiver was also the greatest and wisest person who has ever lived. Either Jesus was what he claimed to be or else he was totally undeserving of any respect or honor.

If we believe in Jesus, we must believe in his resurrection from the dead because he foretold his own death and resurrection. Jesus taught his disciples that he “must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again” (Mark 8:31; cf. Luke 18:33). The announcement of his death and resurrection ahead of time convinced his disciples that he was indeed the Son of God.

The apostle Paul gave another reason to believe in the resurrection of Christ in his letter to the Christians in first-century Corinth. He declared that any hope of a resurrection for us after this life is totally dependent on whether, in fact, Christ was raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:12-23). Paul said, “If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men” (1 Corinthians 15:19). In other words, without the resurrection of Christ, our lives will end at the grave. If there is no hope beyond this life, where is the meaning and purpose of life?

The apostle also argued that the sacrifices being made by those believers who were proclaiming the resurrected Lord would be senseless without the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:30-32). Paul and the other apostles who were witnesses to the resurrection of Christ were ready to die before they would deny that he was alive. That’s how sure they were that the resurrection of Christ was an essential part of the faith of Christians.

Furthermore, Paul went on to suggest that the hedonistic philosophy of “eat and drink for tomorrow we die” makes more sense than sacrificing one’s life for a lie (1 Corinthians 15:32). There is little reason to be

concerned about anything beyond satisfying our personal, momentary and selfish desires if there is no resurrection and no life beyond the present.

Do you have to believe in the resurrection to be a Christian? Yes indeed. The whole of the faith that has sustained Christians throughout more than 2000 years stands or falls on the resurrection of Christ. Through faith in the resurrected Lord, Christians have release from guilt and freedom to live a new and different life free from the power of evil. They have reason to love, care, share and live honestly, soberly and righteously in this present world. Moreover, Christians have the hope of a glorious life eternally with God and Christ where there will be no more death, grief or pain. It may be difficult for some to believe in the resurrection of Christ, but that belief offers a better way to live than any alternative found in this world. Incredible as it may be, that's what Christians all over the world and throughout history have believed. What do you believe in and hope for, dear friend?

[Send questions or comments to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12<sup>th</sup>, Murray, KY 42071 or phone 270-753-1881. This article is reproduced on the web: [www.nchrist.org](http://www.nchrist.org) ] 2013/03/29