

What the Resurrection Proves

John 20:1-9

Intro

Death is all around us! Death is an enemy - our enemy. Death is a reality in which every single human being has faced and will face. We are living in a time of fear, despair and hopelessness. Our generation sees the future as not too promising.

Fear has gripped us in the beginning of the 21st century with the terrorist attacks and the threats of war. No one is safe. The world is very unstable. Death is all around us!

In Washington, D.C., a friendly undertaker closes all his correspondence with “*Eventually yours.*”

Jesus' power over death is an essential message, for we are living in a dying world where all of us face the inevitability of death-- we are deteriorating humans in a deteriorating world. Since the fall of humanity in Genesis 3, there has been a curse on the earth, and that curse has sent the earth and all of its inhabitants on a path to death.

Scientifically it is called the Second Law of Thermodynamics – Entropy.

“Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment” (Isaiah 51:6)

Total deaths in the world

The number of deaths in the world may fluctuate widely from one year to the next. A rough estimate of annual deaths is 60 million or about 2 every second.

Life is short and we are on this planet for a brief time. We will all some day face death. Death is inevitable and irreversible.

Philosophy

For thousands of years philosophers and great minds have tried to find the meaning of life. They have tried to solve the most fundamental and most important question that faces humanity. The question of what is the purpose of life and if there is life beyond death. But no one has satisfactorily arrived at the answer. Humanity is still searching and groping and they have come empty.

Sir Frances Newport: “What arguments are there now to assist me against matters of fact? Do I assert there is no hell while I feel one in my bosom? That there is a God I know, because I continually feel the effect of His wrath. That there is a hell, I am equally certain, having received an earnest of my inheritance already in my own breast.”

J. H. Huxley. A news paper article referred to a striking story in an anonymous book of memoirs published not long ago. The writer met the woman who nursed the great agnostic, Professor J. H. Huxley, through his last illness. She said that as he lay dying the great skeptic suddenly looked up at some sight invisible to mortal eyes, and, staring a while, whispered, “*So it is true.*”

W. C. Fields, a movie star and lifetime agnostic, was discovered reading a Bible on his deathbed. He explained: “I'm looking for a loop-hole.”

It is said that Mahatma Gandhi seemed to have absolute tranquility of soul, knowing nothing of fear. 15 years before his death, Gandhi wrote, “*I must tell you in all humility that Hinduism, as I know it, entirely satisfies my soul, fills my whole being, and I find a solace in the Bhagavad and Upanishads and that I*

miss even in the Sermon on the Mount." Then, just before his death he wrote this: "My days are numbered. I am not likely to live very long--perhaps a year or a little more. For the first time in fifty years I find myself in the slough of despond [state of hoplessness]. All about me is darkness; I am praying for light." Even Gandhi, who seemed to have his life in order, saw his confidence falling apart as he began to face the inevitably of death.

And it goes on, countless philosophers, atheists, agnostics and great minds groping in the pangs of death. Philosophy and science will never find the answer. Even though they tear Christianity apart and ridicule the idea of God they cannot deny the fact that there is a human soul and that soul cries out to its Creator. "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). The Bible says, "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

Canadian author G.B. Hardy wrote a book about life, philosophy, and destiny entitled *Countdown: A Time To Choose*. In his book he noted there are really only two questions to ask with regard to destiny:

- (1) Has anyone ever defeated death?
- (2) And if so, did he make a way for us to do it also?

Nothing is more wonderful than to know that Christ has conquered death. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus came to destroy the devil who holds the power of death. "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Heb. 2:14-15). In other words, he says that people live their entire lives subject to the fear of death, but Christ has come to deliver them from that fear.

Death haunts every person's life – the longer you live, the more inevitably it looms in the future. To know that Christ has conquered death, however, is the ultimate joy. Yet, for most of the world, they have no such knowledge, and therefore they fear death.

If you remove the resurrection of Jesus Christ from Christianity, you don't have Christianity. You literally take the heart out of it. We accept that the resurrection happened by faith, faith in the Scripture, faith that is given to us by the Holy Spirit. We have been convinced by the Holy Spirit that the Bible is true and the Bible says Jesus arose from the dead and that settles that issue. And on the pages of Scripture there is ample convincing evidence.

What does the resurrection prove?

1. The resurrection proves the truthfulness of God's word.

Peter preaching on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem in Acts 2:23-25

Peter is speaking about Christ and His death in verse 23, and then he speaks of His resurrection in verse 24 when he says, "God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power." So he is saying Jesus arose from the dead, death couldn't hold Him.

Peter goes on in verses 25-28, "David said about him: 'I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 26 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, 27 because you will not abandon me to the grave [Hades], nor will you let your Holy One see decay. 28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.'"

In these verses Peter is quoting David from Psalm 16. Notice how Peter interprets it then in verse 29, *“Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day.”* In other words, Peter is saying, "David couldn't be referring to himself. His tomb is still present, still known to the people and they even knew its location, so David could not be referring to himself."

Verse 30-31, *“But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave [Hades], nor did his body see decay.”*

In other words, he says David was prophesizing as a prophet about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was Jesus Christ whose flesh would abide in hope, whose soul would not be abandoned in the grave, Hades, and who as the Holy One would never undergo decay.

It was Jesus Christ who would be given back the path of life and would come back full of gladness face-to-face into the presence of God. David didn't fulfill that. His tomb is still sealed over there near Siloam. But David was a prophet and David was predicting the resurrection of Messiah.

To sum up Peter's argument, his logic would go like this. Psalm 16 refers to someone being resurrected. It can't be David. Messiah was to come as David's greater son, David's lineage. The Psalm refers to Messiah and Messiah will therefore be raised from the dead. And then he concludes in verse 32, *“God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.”*

The Old Testament then in Psalm 16 predicts the resurrection of the Christ. If Jesus Christ doesn't rise from the grave, the Bible is not telling us the truth. But the resurrection of Christ proves that the Bible speaks truth. What does the resurrection prove then? The truthfulness of the Word of God

Paul is preaching in Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13

Acts 13:29-35, *“29 When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead, 31 and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people. 32 “We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers 33 he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: “ ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father. 34 The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words: “ ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.’ 35 So it is stated elsewhere: “ ‘You will not let your Holy One see decay.’”*

Again you see Paul preaching just like Peter on the Day of Pentecost, on three Old Testament prophecies that speak of the resurrection of Christ. The Scripture is at stake. If Jesus doesn't rise, Psalm 2 is wrong, Psalm 16 is wrong, Isaiah 55 is wrong, any other Old Testament passage indicating the resurrection of Jesus Christ is wrong, And if so then the Bible cannot be trusted. But if Jesus is raised from the dead, the prophecies are true, and the Word of God is confirmed as truth.

All the way back in the law, the torah, Moses' writings, all the way back in the prophets as well as the holy writings, the Psalms, Messiah will die and Messiah will rise. When Jesus arose then all of these prophecies and many more were fulfilled and the Word of God was proven to be true.

2. Secondly, the resurrection proves the deity of the Son of God.

In fact, no greater proof exists for the divine nature of Jesus Christ than He rising from the dead. That is the most monumental thing that He did to verify that He was God, for only God can give life, only God can conquer death.

If you look in to the New Testament you will find many individuals giving testimony to Christ as God. Some are the most amazing.

For example, the possessed man near Galilee sees Jesus and the demons in him affirm the deity of Christ. In Mark 5:6-7, *“When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?”* Even the demons, the fallen angels know of His deity, they know He is the Son of the Most High God.

Then there were the disciples who gave testimony of Christ’s deity. Peter on behalf of all of them said, *“Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God”* (Matt. 16:16). Thomas said, *“My Lord and my God”* (John 20:28). Nathaniel said, *“Thou art the Son of God.”* Matthew said, *“He is God with us.”* Mark said, *“He is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”* Luke said, *“He is the Son of God.”* The Apostles, the writers of the New Testament, affirm the deity of Christ.

There was the testimony of a Roman soldier at His crucifixion, *“Truly this man is the Son of God.”*

You have the testimony of all of these individuals to the deity of Christ. But none of them is as potent as the testimony of Paul. Look at Romans 1:1-4, *“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

At Christ’s baptism the Father spoke out of heaven and said, *“This is my beloved Son, listen to Him.”* And that was a strong word from God at His baptism. But an even stronger word from God was that God raised Him from the dead and God was in essence saying: *“This is My beloved Son and He is proven to be My Son in that He has been raised from the dead, now for sure and for every reason listen to Him.”* So, the resurrection not only proves that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, but it proves that He is God.

3. Thirdly, His resurrection proves the completion of the salvation of God.

Romans 4:25 may be the most wonderful, the most powerful verse with regard to the application of His resurrection...makes a third point, and I want you to get this third point.

Romans 4:23-25, *“The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, 24 but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”*

In order for God to justify us, in order for God to declare us right and acceptable to Him, He had to raise Jesus from the dead. When it says, *“His name shall be called Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins”*, that’s exactly what God wanted. But in order to accomplish it, He had to raise Christ from the dead. It was God raising Him from the dead to affirm that what He did on the cross satisfied God's holy justice.

If He didn't rise, then all He is, is Jesus Christ Superstar and His death is the death of an ordinary man and has no saving value. But He did rise from the dead and He was raised by the Father for our justification. Justification means declared innocent and made right. He was raised in order that in the sight of God we might be made right and innocent, in order that in the sight of God we might be without sin, in order that our sin might be dismissed and forgiven. We are acquitted of our sever crime, sin.

There are so many essential features in our salvation dependent on the resurrection. Part of being justified before God means that we receive eternal life. Jesus said, *“Because I live you shall live also.”* In other

words, it was in the death of Christ and His resurrection that He granted to us eternal life. If He never rose then He showed He couldn't conquer death. If He never rose He wouldn't be alive. If He wasn't alive He couldn't give us life.

So, eternal life is dependent upon the resurrection. That's a component in the completion of God's salvation.

Also if Jesus hadn't risen from the grave He never would have ascended back to the Father. If He hadn't ascended back to the Father, He never would have sent the Holy Spirit. He Himself said that He could not send the Holy Spirit until He had gone back to the Father, John 16:7, *“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”*

And when He comes He'll convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. When He comes He'll lead you into all truth. When He comes He'll bring all things into remembrance. When He comes He will place you into the body of Christ. When He comes He will become the guarantee of your eternal life. When He comes He will take up residence in you and you will become His temple. When He comes He will empower you for service. When He comes He will guide you. When He comes He will instruct you in the Word of God. He will be the anointing that teaches you so that you need no human teacher.

The whole full-blown ministry of the Holy Spirit was dependent upon the resurrection of Christ. No resurrection - no ascension, no ascension – no Holy Spirit, no Holy Spirit – no church. When you talk about the resurrection proving the completion of the saving work of God, you're talking about the heart of Christianity. He had to rise to give us eternal life. He had to have the life to give it. He had to rise to go back to the Father to send us the Holy Spirit.

Christ's Resurrection Proves

- The first point, His resurrection proves the truthfulness of the Word of God.
- The second point, His resurrection proves his deity as the Son of God.
- Thirdly, His resurrection proves the completion of the salvation of God.

Conclusion

As a young man, D. L. Moody was called upon suddenly to preach a funeral sermon. He decided that he would hunt the gospels to try to find one of Christ's funeral sermons, but he searched in vain. He found that every time Christ attended a funeral, He broke it up by raising the person from the dead! And so Christ never gave a funeral sermon. When the dead heard Christ's voice, they immediately sprang to life.

We should rejoice in death because Christ has conquered it for us. In His presence is fullness of joy and at His right hand are pleasures forevermore.

All gospel realities hinge on His resurrection and your eternity is at stake. You can make your choice. It doesn't seem to me to be much of a choice, to choose heaven, forgiveness, blessedness, joy, fulfillment in His presence, or damnation, punishment, hell forever out of His presence. But that's the choice.