

## The Blessed Hope

We are approaching Easter Sunday when we invite one of the Jewish missions to show how the all that was happening in the Jewish Old Testament is very directly connected to all that is happening in the church. That connection is Jesus Christ. For us, this makes Easter a great time to show how Jesus Christ is for every man, Jew and Gentile alike.

Because of this focus, we are taking the time this week to remember the resurrection itself and how it is the central message of hope that we have of victory over death.

### 1. Confusion of the disciples -

In Mark 9:31,32, Jesus makes a plain and direct prediction: He will be killed and rise again. But the disciples don't understand it and are afraid to ask.

Mark 9:31,32 For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.  
32 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

This isn't an isolated moment. Mark's Gospel emphasizes over and over how the disciples struggle to grasp Jesus' true identity and mission.

Mark 8:31-33 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and *of* the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

32 And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

33 But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of

God, but the things that be of men.

Mark 9:10 And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

Mark 10:32-34 And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,

33 *Saying*, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles:

34 And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.

Despite seeing miracles, hearing His teachings, and being told multiple times about His death and resurrection, they remain confused.

The disciples, like many Jews, expected a conquering Messiah—not one who would suffer and die. Even when told plainly, they filtered Jesus' words through their preexisting paradigms. This shows how deeply entrenched assumptions can blind people to truth, even when that truth is spoken clearly.

The apostles were amazingly bewildered after all that they had learned from Christ what His mission of the resurrection was all about. The passage underscores our need not only for divine truth, but for divine patience and empowerment to truly receive it.

## 2. Confusion of the world -

On Mars Hill, the Athenians were intrigued by Paul's message until he

mentioned the resurrection.

Acts 17:32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this *matter*.

Their curiosity about "new ideas" hit a wall when confronted with something that defied their philosophy. The resurrection was offensive to them. This was not because it was supernatural, but because it was personal, bodily, and invasive to their worldview. They could entertain abstract gods and moral systems, but not a risen man who claimed authority over all people.

Modernists follow a similar path. As heirs of Enlightenment rationalism, they often want to keep the ethics of Christianity: love your neighbor, help the poor, promote peace. They diminish the miraculous. But, without the miracles of the incarnation and the empty tomb what remains is a form of "Christianity without Christ," a shell of behaviors divorced from the Spirit that empowers them. Paul describes this kind of religiosity in 2 Timothy 3:5

2Tim 3:5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

The resurrection isn't just a doctrine—it's the heartbeat of Christian hope.

1Cor 15:17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins.

To remove the Resurrection is to gut Christianity of its power and promise. Modernists may admire Christ as a teacher, but they stumble—like the Athenians—when faced with the risen Lord. Some have been critical of angelic announcements or empty tombs. They say it has nothing to do with time periods, whether three days, forty days, or fifty days. It has nothing to do with resuscitated bodies that appear and

disappear or that finally exit this world in a heavenly ascension. All of this, by the way, actually *is* needed to prove that the resurrection is history and not a myth. If the Easter story is *not* historical, why believe the message at all!? The belief in the death and resurrection of Christ is what sets Christianity apart from every other religion? There are many religions that are monotheistic and even honor Christ.

This is precisely what Islam denies. One Sunni Muslim says, "Muslims believe that Allah saved the Messiah from the ignominy of crucifixion." Another adds, "We honor [Jesus] more than you [Christians] do. . . . We refuse to believe that God would permit him to suffer death on the cross."

The issue is: Do Islam... or any other faiths besides Christianity cherish the righteous suffering and death of the God-Man, Jesus Christ, as the only ground of our acceptance with God? The answer to that question is No. Only Christians base their acceptance with God on the death of a crucified, risen, and reigning person. All other faiths reject the unique saving relevance of Jesus Christ.

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[www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-great-offense-was-jesus-really-crucified](http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-great-offense-was-jesus-really-crucified)

### 3. If Christ Be Not Raised -

1Cor 15:12-19 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

When the apostle Paul wrote about this passage, the believers in the church at Corinth were struggling with the concept of the future physical resurrection of Christians who had already died. They weren't doubting the resurrection of Christ in the earlier part

of the chapter. They didn't have any problem with the idea of the spirit living on in some other world, because the immortality of the soul was certainly part of the prevalent Greek philosophy. But the resurrection of the body was a difficult for them.

In order to deal with this problem the apostle Paul directed the attention of the Corinthian believers to the resurrection of Christ. If they believed in the physical resurrection of Christ, why should the concept of the physical resurrection of the Christian be so hard to handle? If God raised the Man, Jesus Christ, from the dead, it was logical that He could raise any person from the dead. However, the opposite was logically true, too! If there was no such thing as the physical resurrection of persons from the dead, then even Christ could not have been raised from the dead.

1Cor 15:13,16 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

- If Christ was not raised, we must conclude that everything about the Christian faith is without a solid foundation and "up for grabs." If Christ is not risen, our preaching is vain.

1Cor 15:14 And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain.

What authority do we have for even preaching "love your neighbor as yourself" (let alone the resurrection!) if Christ is still dead? We become humanistic teachers with no higher authority than what the majority of the people in our culture "feel" is right. If Jesus is not living today, the message of the Bible is without authority and hollow.

- Our Christian faith is empty if the resurrection is a hoax. Pinning our destiny on the teachings and claims of a man who is dead is nothing more than wishful thinking. What guarantee do we

have that there is any hope beyond the cemetery if the One who claimed that He could conquer death is in reality dead Himself?

- If Christ is not risen, we are false witnesses of God.

1Cor 15:15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

We are not just deluded religious fanatics who are "playing church." We are downright liars! Of course, if God doesn't really exist then it doesn't matter much if we're liars, since there would be no absolute standards. However, if God does exist and He did not raise Christ from the dead, then we are distorting the truth and are false witnesses against God Himself if we go on preaching the resurrection and celebrating Easter!

- If Christ is not risen, our faith is worthless and we are still in our sins.

1Cor 15:17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins.

Our faith is useless because it depends on the resurrection. There is no salvation if the One who claimed He could take away our sins is still in a Jerusalem tomb. If the One in whom we placed our faith as Savior never really triumphed over death, what proof do we have that the debt for our sins has been paid? Without the resurrection, the death penalty for our sins remains.

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord [**there is no eternal life if the One Who was to provide it was Himself dead**].

If there is no resurrection, there is no redemption and no reconciliation with God.

- If Christ is not risen, those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

1Cor 15:18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

If Easter is a sham, Christians who have died are forever lost. There will be no awakening from the grave. The familiar Christian epitaph, "Asleep in Jesus," is just a euphemism for "Gone Forever." The word "perished" does not mean annihilation or extinction, but rather loss or ruin. It is not loss of being, but loss of well-being.

- If Christ is not risen, and if only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

1Cor 15:19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

Why are we most miserable? Because we have sacrificed, surrendered, suffered, labored and hoped for nothing but an illusion! We are superstitious fools living in a dream world if Jesus is not alive today. This fantasy may give us "peace of mind" and "hope" in this life, but so what? Why all the sweat and tears if it's all just a delusion? As far as the apostle Paul was concerned, if there is no resurrection the more logical lifestyle would be to live it up and do your own thing. This is exactly what he says in verse 32! "If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." Without Easter, dead Christians have perished and living Christians are to be pitied.

But Christ *has* been raised from the dead.

1Cor 15:20 But now **is** Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept. **[so that *they* can follow in *their* resurrection]**

What a glorious relief! All those previous deductions are swept away with

this one great truth. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is the proof and power of Christianity. The empty tomb is the guarantee of the Christian's hope. As the early fruit is the promise of the harvest soon to come, so the resurrection of our Lord is the guarantee that the finality of death has been conquered for every Christian.

#### 4. If Christ Be Raised -

Only Christianity upholds the truth of Romans 4:25.

Rom 4:25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

The resurrection is part of the whole Gospel message. It was not until the resurrection that our whole justification, or being made right, or righteous, was completed.

1Cor 15:3-4 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

The resurrection was prominent in the apostles' preaching. They startled the world by preaching that their religion was based upon the resurrection of the dead the rising of dead bodies to life again. The proof was that Jesus Christ, the Lord of heaven, became man and was put to death for the sins of his people, and then rose again on the third day for their salvation. No other religion had such a doctrine.

Many of the ancients *did* have some idea that there has to be more than this life.

- The ancient Egyptians built their pyramids, expressing the hope that the pharaohs entombed in them might live appropriately in the next world.



- In the Eastern religions, we see the doctrine of reincarnation: depending on how you behave yourself, you may return as someone higher up lower down. After countless lifetimes, you might be absorbed in the Bramahman, an impersonal ocean of the godhead
- We see the Valhalla of Norse mythology, where the souls of slain heroes are supposedly received.
- We see the "happy hunting ground" anticipated by the American Indians.

There just has to be some kind of life after death. The Roman world in which the apostles preached was philosophically Greek. They believed in life after death for the soul. But they were firmly convinced that the body is "the prison house of the soul." When the body dies, in their view, it is dead forever.

Unique among the religions of the ancient world, Judaism taught that there would be a resurrection coming. It is true that some Jews in Jesus' day, especially the Sadducees (who were like our modern theological liberals), denied the supernatural, angels, and the resurrection. But orthodox Jews believed that dead bodies would rise again. But, the Old Testament certainly teaches the resurrection.

- In what is perhaps the oldest book of the Bible, Job has these famous words:

Job 19:25-26 For I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth:

26 And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

- Psalm 22 predicts the Messiah's crucifixion. He can count all his bones, he is pierced, and his executioners gamble over his clothes. And after all this, what does he say?

Psa 22:22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of

the congregation will I praise thee.

This passage is quoted in Hebrews 2:12, where it is interpreted as referring to the living Christ singing in the midst of his church.

Heb 2:12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

In other words, in Psalm 22 Christ's resurrection follows his crucifixion.

- Isaiah ascribes the Resurrection to the Messiah

Isa 26:19 Thy dead *men* shall live, *together with* my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew *is as* the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

- Daniel spoke of the Resurrection.

Dan 12:2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt.

There you have resurrection, not just of believers, but also of unbelievers—not just to glory, but also to damnation.

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[https://www.opc.org/new\\_horizons/NH02/03e.html](https://www.opc.org/new_horizons/NH02/03e.html)

Rom 4:23-25 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; **[Righteousness was given to Abraham]**

24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Why is the resurrection necessary? Why was it not sufficient to have the payment made by the death of Christ? The resurrection is not just a nicety that God added on. It was a necessity. He was resurrected for our justification. When God performed the miracle of our salvation, it was intended for the *whole creature* to be redeemed. Christ's death atoned for our sins, but the resurrection was the completion of our salvation so that we would be paid for and brought back into God's plan in our entirety – spirit *and* body, the resurrection would reverse the fall.

Our justification began with the delivering of Christ and ended with the resurrection of Christ and was composed of everything from the delivering to the resurrecting. The resurrection was the keystone, the completion and perfection of our justification. With the resurrection, our justification was not only for our spiritual rebirth, but for the whole creature.

## 5. The Blessed Hope -

Now we not only have hope in Christ but we look for what is called the blessed hope, the return of the resurrected Christ. If Christ had not risen from the dead, He would not return bodily in the blessed hope.

Titus 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

With that hope, we have a whole new outlook. We are so pressed to make the right decision and the best move to make in life. We wonder about the direction we are trying to point our children and our family. We wonder if there will be any regret over the choices we make. Although we can't guarantee the best life possible because no matter what choice we make we live in a world filled with problems. However, you can be sure of this. A consistent life in Christ is guaranteed to be the best and most blessed choice to make. And, when this

life is over, you are resurrected and get heaven, too!

Col 3:1-3 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

If you have not made your choice to follow Christ yet, today can be the day you do that. There are those who have dismissed the resurrection of Christ out of hand, but there are many who are opposed to God who have examined the resurrection honestly and their life and eternity was turned around. If you choose to follow, your life can be turned around, too.

For those who are saved, you can attest to the fact that it was the best choice you have made. I want to encourage you to set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. Things on the earth can sometimes be used in your mission, but it is the mission that counts above all else. Perhaps today is the day you commit yourself to be baptized or to be part of the team of servants working in the kingdom. Perhaps this is a time when someone needs to repent and get back on track. This is what the hope of the resurrection is all about.

1. Confusion of the disciples - Mark 9:31,32, 8:31-33, 9:10, 10:32-34
2. Confusion of the world - Acts 17:32, 2Tim 3:5, 1Cor 15:17, Rom 4:25
3. If Christ Be Not Raised - 1Cor 15:12-19, Rom 6:23
4. If Christ Be Raised - Job 19:25-26, Psa 22:22, Heb 2:12, Isa 26:19, Dan 12:2, Rom 4:23-25
5. The Blessed Hope - Titus 2:13, Col 3:1-3