

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST – DOES IT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE?

RESURRECTION SUNDAY

April, 1, 2018

BCC. Midway

All followers of Jesus are very aware that the death, burial and Resurrection of Christ are absolutely foundational for our faith.

The Cross and the Empty Tomb are central to our faith.

No cross – no forgiveness of sin; no relationship with the living God.

No empty tomb – no living Christ and therefore no Christianity.

The evil one and his hosts know this and therefore through the centuries people have tried desperately to disprove the R. The theories that they have concocted as alternatives to His actually rising from the dead take a lot of faith and some are comical while others are full of folly.

Muslims for example do not believe that Jesus died on the cross.

Others like our Doukhorbor friends do not believe that Jesus rose physically from the dead.

We believe what the apostle Paul stated:

If Christ has not been raised from the dead, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

The case for the Resurrection of Christ is incredible.

This morning I want to focus on one proof for the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead – the changed lives of His followers. And not only those who saw Him alive but all who have become followers of Jesus since that day.

How did the R. of Christ affected those closest to Him and does His resurrection still affect people today? Does it still make a difference?

A. The Effect of His Death!

After His death and burial His followers were convinced that He was dead.

1.The women who came to anoint His body were convinced that He was dead.

Luke 23:55-56 and Luke 24:1: *The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how His body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment. On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.*

They were convinced that He was dead. They came looking for one who was dead.

Note what the angel said to them: *Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen!*

2.His disciples were convinced that He was dead.

You recall that Peter was full of bravado before the cross:

Simon, Simon, satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” But he replied, “Lord I am ready to go with You to prison and to death.” Jesus answered, “I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know Me (Luke 22:31-34).

And that is exactly what happened. He was not ready to die with Jesus.

The effect of His death was immediate:

Consider the emotions of the disciples and the women after Jesus died: Grief, disbelief, hopelessness, fear, uncertainty.

All their hopes and dreams were dashed when they saw their Lord and Master die.

Note the body language and also the words of the 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24.

Jesus approaches them and asks them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” They stood still, their faces downcast. . . “Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

Then they tell Him about Jesus: *Jesus of Nazareth was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed Him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified Him; but we had hoped that He was the One who was going to redeem Israel* (Luke 24:17-21).

When the women came to tell them what had happened at the empty tomb we read:

But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense (Luke 24:11).

We know that after His Crucifixion His disciples hid behind locked doors because they were so afraid of the Jewish authorities – the ones that had convinced the people to demand His crucifixion.

John 20:19:

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”

Luke 24:37-43:

They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at My hands and My feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” When He had said this, He showed them His hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement He asked them “Do you have anything here to eat?” They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and He took it and ate it in their presence.

They were so sure that Jesus was dead that they had a very difficult time believing that He was actually standing in front of them.

B. The Effect of His Resurrection: It Changed the Lives of first-century followers of Jesus.

The disciples moved from cowering individuals hiding behind locked doors to courageous individuals who were no longer afraid of the Jewish authorities. Why? Because they became convinced that He was alive.

Acts 1:3: After His suffering, He showed Himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive.

Then comes the day of Pentecost.

The followers of Jesus are together in Jerusalem meeting for prayer when the power of the promised Holy Spirit falls upon them.

Peter, the cowardly Peter who had denied that he even knew Jesus, gets up to speak:

Acts 2:22-24, 32:

Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through Him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross. **But God raised Him from the dead, freeing Him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Him. . . God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.**

One day Peter and John are going to the temple to pray. There they encounter a crippled man who was often placed there to beg from those who entered the temple.

Peter looks at him and says, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

The man walks and a crowd of people quickly gather. Peter uses the occasion to boldly tell them about Jesus:

You handed Him (Jesus) over to be killed, and you disowned Him before Pilate, though he had decided to let Him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. **You killed the Author of Life but God raised Him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.**

The authorities hear about this and don't like it.

They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead (Acts 4:2).

They arrest them and put them in jail and the next morning the top Jewish religious leaders gather to decide what to do with them. They ask them by what power or name they had preformed this miracle.

It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified **but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed (Acts 4:10).**

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus (Acts 4:14).

The authorities tell them that they cannot speak or teach in the name of Jesus.

Note their reply: Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard (Acts 4:19-20).

Does it sound like they were convinced of His Resurrection? Absolutely! And their lives were changed as a result.

C. THE EFFECT OF THE RESURRECTION TODAY!

Was the **Resurrection** of Christ only applicable to His first-century followers?

We see that it had great effect on them – their lives were changed.

We can read of changed lives throughout the centuries since the **Resurrection** of Christ.

Not one of us here today could be a follower of Jesus unless Jesus had actually risen from the dead.

So His **Resurrection** has impacted you. You have placed your faith in this risen Christ.

However, I want to know whether the **Resurrection** of Christ continues to affect your everyday life.

Does it really make a difference in your life? Or do you and I need to hear those words: "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" do we by our lives show that the Resurrection of Christ is real?

If you were arrested and charged with being a follower of the risen Jesus would there be enough evidence to make the charge stick?

When difficulties and pain come into our lives does the **Resurrection** make any difference?

How does the **Resurrection** impact our disappointments and discouragements?

What does the **Resurrection** do for those who have lost a loved one?

For those whose children are not following Jesus.

For those who are experiencing awful marriages.

For those who are dying for their faith today, in places around the world.

Romans 8:28, 31-39:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. . . If God is for us, who can be against us? . . . Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Resurrection of Christ changed everything for His followers and so it ought to change everything for us who believe that Jesus died, was buried and rose bodily from the dead.

Because of the Resurrection we have HOPE, FAITH, LOVE and LIFE.

1.The Resurrection of Christ makes possible a personal relationship with the awesome Creator of the Universe. That is why Jesus went to the cross and that is why He rose again.

Because of the **Resurrection** we can have eternal Life. When I enter into a relationship with God I receive eternal Life - it is an eternal relationship.

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

2.The Resurrection of Jesus Christ makes faith possible

And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

Because of the Resurrection of Christ our faith in Him is sure. Our faith is in the living God not in some dead person.

3. Because of the Resurrection I can get up every morning with hope and with purpose.

I have hope because I know who is in charge. The One who conquered the devil, sin and death.

4.Because of the Resurrection of Christ, I can be assured that He hears my prayers.

I don't pray to a dead Saviour and Lord. In fact because He rose from the dead He is now at the right hand of the Father in heaven and He is interceding for me every day.

5.Because of the Resurrection we have hope not only for this life, but also for the life to come. We know that this is not all that there is. We know that in reality our existence on earth is like the morning mist that appears for a short time and then is gone.

6.The Resurrection of Jesus Christ makes possible our Resurrection from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:20:

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

7.Because of the Resurrection of Christ, I have hope and the assurance that He always keeps His word and that He is coming back just as He said he would (John 14: 1-3).

8. Because of the Resurrection we have the assurance that we will see our loved ones - those who have died as followers of Jesus - again.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14:

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him.

Story: The resurrection of Debbie (Lee Strobel, The Case for Easter, 82-84)

Revelation 21:1-5

PRAYER:

SONG: #299 – He Lives