

## REALITY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

(1Co 15:1-25) 04-12-20

Grace Bible Church, Gillette, Wyoming

Pastor Daryl Hilbert

### INTRODUCTION TO CHRIST'S REAL RESURRECTION

A. Last week's sermon was "The Beast's False Resurrection." It ended by contrasting the Antichrist's false resurrection with Christ's real resurrection. The irony of it all is that Satan does everything in his power to get the world to deny Christ's real resurrection but in the future Satan will deceive the world in believing the Antichrist's false resurrection.

B. Satan has always been attempting to deceive mankind into denying Christ's resurrection. The reason is that the resurrection of Christ confirms the Person and Work of Christ. Christ's resurrection also confirms the defeat of Satan. Therefore, Satan has influenced the masses with manifold explanations attempting to deny Christ's resurrection.

#### I. DENIERS OF THE RESURRECTION

A. Disciples Stole the Body - In the mid 1700's, a German professor of languages, H.M.S. Reimarus, spun the old line that the disciples stole the body and left an empty tomb. He maintains that the disciples' purpose was to start a new religion by making Jesus a resurrected prophet. Professor Reimarus was not the first to espouse this view. It was actually the chief priests of Jesus' day that persuaded the Roman soldiers to spread the false story (Mat 28:11-15).

B. Swoon Theory - In 1828, a rationalist theologian named H.E.G. Paulus commercialized "the swoon theory," which suggested that Jesus did not actually die on the cross but fell unconscious ("swooned") and then revived. His followers believed that He was raised from the dead. Nevertheless, a Roman soldier confirmed the death of Jesus (Joh 19:33-34). The swooning of Jesus is also questioned by the fact that 100 pounds of spices were wrapped around his body and placed in a small sealed tomb for three days (Joh 19:39-40). If he wasn't dead, surely this would have killed Him. However, the irony is that a "swoon theory" may actually be the way in which the Antichrist's resurrection is falsified.

C. Metaphorical Resurrection - In the mid 1900's, liberal theologian Rudolf Bultmann, wrote that the resurrection was not a literal event, rather, Jesus is raised in the hearts of believers by faith. *Bultmann urges people to live as if the stories in the Bible were true, rather than trying to convince themselves that they actually happened historically.*

#### II. CONTEMPORARY DENIERS OF THE RESURRECTION

A. Miracles are Improbable - *I'm just going to say that miracles are so highly improbable that they're the least possible occurrence in any given instance. They violate the way nature naturally works. They are so highly improbable, their probability is infinitesimally remote, that we call them miracles* (Bart Ehrman).

B. Historians Only Establish Probable - *Historians can only establish what probably happened in the past, and by definition a miracle is the least probable occurrence. And so, by the very nature of the canons of historical research, we can't claim historically that a miracle probably happened. By definition, it probably didn't. And history can only establish what probably did* (Bart Ehrman).

C. Any Theory is More Probable - *[Any theory is] more probable than a miracle happening because a miracle by definition is the least probable occurrence...I could dream up twenty of these [theories] that are implausible but are still more plausible than the resurrection* (Bart Ehrman).

#### D. Historical Evidence Dismissed

1. *[P]ossibly two of Jesus' family members stole the body. [They were caught and] killed and [all three bodies were] thrown into a common tomb. It probably didn't happen, but its more plausible than the explanation that God raised Jesus from the dead.* (Ehrman)

2. *The tales of entombment and resurrection were latter-day wishful thinking. Instead, Jesus' corpse went the way of all abandoned criminals' bodies: it was probably barely covered with dirt, vulnerable to the wild dogs that roamed the wasteland of the execution grounds* (Crossan). When asked why he believed this, this historical scholar informed everyone that he just had a "hunch."

3. *For me, the message of Easter is that love is stronger than life or death. That's a much more awesome claim than that they put Jesus in the tomb and three days later he wasn't*

*there. For Christians for whom the physical resurrection becomes a sort of obsession, that seems to me to be a pretty wobbly faith. What if tomorrow someone found the body of Jesus still in the tomb? Would that then mean that Christianity was a lie? No, faith is stronger than that* (Serene Jones, Pres. of Union Theological Seminary, proud mother and fierce theologian)

### III. THE REALITY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

#### A. It Was According to the Scriptures (1Co 15:3-4)

1. The Resurrection is Part of the Gospel - The context of 1Co 15:1-4 is the “**gospel**.” Paul “**preached**” the gospel. The Corinthians “**received**” and had taken their “**stand**” in the gospel. The Corinthians were “**saved**” by the gospel. Paul “**makes known**” (defines) the gospel in vv. 3-4. The gospel is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection (“**raised on the third day**”) is part of the gospel.

2. The Resurrection was Confirmed by Scripture - The fact that the resurrection is according to the Scriptures means that it is “**real**” and means that it is true. The Scriptures are inspired by God which means that God is the source of Scripture (2Ti 3:16). It means that it is God’s Word. It means that Scripture is absolute truth since God is a God of Truth and is unable to lie (Tit 1:2; Heb 6:18). If God’s Word said that Jesus rose from the dead, it doesn’t matter how many people deny it or how many sophisticated interpretations attempt to explain it away; Jesus rose from the dead! 1 Corinthians 15 is the greatest polemic on the reality of the resurrection, and the apostle Paul begins it with the strongest argument under heaven, namely, the argument from Scripture. The reality of the resurrection is “**according to the Scriptures.**”

a. Liberal Theology - Sadly, liberal theology has influenced Christian thinking today in regard to God’s Word. God and His Word cannot be proved; therefore, we cannot be certain. Now I understand we cannot see God and that the Christian life is by faith. However, God states that His attributes, eternal power, and divine nature are so clearly seen in creation that all men are without excuse (Rom 1:20). There are very good arguments to support the Bible’s own claims of divine inspiration (2Ti 3:16).

b. God’s Point of View of Scripture - But I wonder what God’s point of view is on Scripture. He declares that since Scripture is His Word, then it is as reliable and certain as He is (Heb 6:18). It is inspired, infallible, and inerrant. It is as trustworthy as God Himself. Therefore, we can be absolutely certain that Jesus was raised from the dead because the inspired Scriptures tell us so.

c. Age of Skepticism - Be careful not to be influenced by this age of skepticism. Be careful not to be influenced by definitions that stack the odds in the unbeliever’s favor.

d. Covid-19 - By the way, Many atheists and agnostics claim they cannot believe in a God they cannot see. However, many atheists and agnostics are hunkered down in their own home at this very moment because of a virus (Covid-19) that they cannot see.

B. It Was According to Prophecy - The resurrection of Christ was also prophesied. Although this statement is equivalent to saying that the resurrection was “according to the Scriptures,” it brings in an additional element. When Scripture foretells an event and that event occurs, it is a confirmation of the validity of Scripture. In other words, man cannot predict the future, but an all-knowing and all-powerful God can, and He does so in prophecy. Not only is the death of Christ prophesied (Isa 53:5 cf. 1Pe 2:24; Psa 22:1 cf. Mt 27:46; Psa 22:16 cf. Joh 19:18; 20:25) but so also is the resurrection of Christ.

1. Prophecy: Christ will not be abandoned to Sheol: Psa 16:10; Fulfilled: Luk 24:6,31,34.
2. Prophecy: Christ’s flesh will not see decay: Psa 16:10; Fulfilled: Act 2:31-32; 13:34-37.
3. Prophecy: Christ will see His offspring: Isa 53:10; Fulfilled: Joh 1:12; Gal 3:26.
4. Prophecy: Christ will declare God’s name to the brethren: Psa 22:22; Fulfilled: Mat 28:10; Joh 20:17; 1Co 15:5-9 cf. Heb 2:12.

C. It Was According to Eyewitnesses (1Co 15:5-9)

1. Eyewitness Testimony - Paul gave the account of the eyewitnesses to Christ's resurrection, which included himself. Firsthand accounts are one of the main ways historians give credibility to historical events, that is, unless you are referring to the supernatural resurrection of Christ.
  2. *[I]t has to be the kind of information that historians of every stripe agree is valid information, such as eyewitness testimony. And appeals to the supernatural are not accepted in the historical community as being valid criteria on which to evaluate a past event* (Ehrman).
  3. Disputed Eyewitness Testimony - How do some historians get around firsthand accounts from Jesus' disciples who witnessed the resurrected Christ? They either say that the disciples had an hallucination of the resurrected Christ or that the accounts of the Gospels were written by other people, at a later time, and who titled them after the name of a disciple (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).
  4. *The Gospels were written 35 to 65 years after Jesus' death, not by people who were eyewitnesses, but by people living later. The Gospels were written by highly literate, trained, Greek-speaking Christians of the second and third generation. They're not written by Jesus' Aramaic-speaking followers* (Ehrman).
  5. Scriptural Eyewitness Testimony - Even though Paul wrote his epistle to the Corinthians some 26 years (AD 56) after the death and resurrection of Christ, he and others still living, were eyewitnesses to the resurrected Christ (1Co 15:5, 7). There is good evidence to believe that Jesus' apostles and disciples did write the Gospels named after them. At least two of them actually did witness the resurrected Christ (Matthew and John, Act 3:15; 4:33) and there was nothing in their writings to suggest it was anything other than a real resurrected Christ (Luk 24:36-43). Furthermore, there is nothing known in clinical psychiatry as a mass hallucination (1Co 15:6). In addition, Paul himself witnessed the resurrected Christ (1Co 15:8-9 cf. Act 9:1-30; 22:3-21; 26:3-21).
- D. It Was Necessary for Salvation
1. Proved Jesus the Son of God - The resurrection proved that Jesus is the Son of God (Rom 1:4). Mere men normally do not rise from the dead. Just ask any secular historian. Only the Son of God could be raised from the dead. Therefore, when Jesus Christ was raised from the dead it proved that He was the Son of God, even as He (Mat 26:63-64; Luk 22:70; Joh 10:36) and others (Mat 27:54; Joh 20:31; Act 9:20) claimed.
  2. Proved Atonement for Sin - The resurrection proved that Jesus' death was for the atonement of sin (Act 13:34-38). In fact, the connection between Christ's resurrection and proof of atonement was part of Paul's argument in 1Co 15:17.
  3. Part of Apostles' Gospel - The resurrection was part of the Apostles' Gospel preaching. The apostle's preaching was the basis for doctrine and is now called apostle's kerygma. So, the resurrection was part of the apostle's doctrine. They didn't invent it, but they proclaimed Christ's real resurrection (Act 2:24; 3:15; 4:33; 10:40-42; 17:3).
    - a. Peter - (Act 2:24, 31, 32; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30; 7:56; 10:40)
    - b. Paul - (Act 13:30, 33, 34, 37; 17:3, 31; 26:23)
    - c. Luke - (Act 4:2, 33; 17:18)
- E. It Provided Blessings for the Believer
1. Because of the reality of Christ's resurrection, preaching is not in vain (1Co 15:14).
  2. Because of the reality of Christ's resurrection, apostles were not false witnesses (1Co 15:15).
  3. Because of the reality of Christ's resurrection, faith is not in vain (1Co 15:17a).
  4. Because of the reality of Christ's resurrection, believers are not still in their sin (1Co 15:17b).
  5. Because of the reality of Christ's resurrection, deceased believers have not perished (1Co 15:18).
  6. Because of the reality of Christ's resurrection, He will come again, will save His people, will judge the wicked, will judge the Antichrist (with his false resurrection), will set up His kingdom, and will reign as king (1Co 15:20-25; Act 17:31).

#### IV. OBSERVATION AND APPLICATIONS

A. Exhortation to Unbelievers - Don't let the deniers of the resurrection keep you from coming to Christ.

B. Exhortation to Believers - Don't let the deniers of the resurrection keep you from enjoying full assurance of salvation (1Co 15:19-20).

C. Final Word from a Historian - The historian Thomas Arnold of Oxford has written, *The evidence for our Lord's life and death and resurrection may be and often has been shown to be satisfactory. It is good according to the common rules for distinguishing good evidence from bad. Thousands and tens of thousands of persons have gone through it piece by piece as carefully as every judge summing up on an important case. I have myself done it many times over, not to persuade others but to satisfy myself. I have been used for many years to study the history of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is better proved by fuller evidence than the great sign that God has given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead.*

D. However, we still have a better testimony, God's testimony in His Word, "Christ died for sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1Co 15:3-4).

## THE REALITY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION



### REALITY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION (1Co 15:1-25) 04-12-20

#### INTRO TO CHRIST'S REAL RESURRECTION

- I. DENIERS OF THE RESURRECTION
- II. CONTEMPORARY DENIERS OF THE RESUR.
- III. REALITY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION
  - A. It Was According to the Scriptures
  - B. It Was According to Prophecy
  - C. It Was According to Eyewitnesses
  - D. It Was Necessary for Salvation
  - E. It Provided Blessings for the Believer
- IV. OBSERVATION AND APPLICATIONS
  - A. Exhortation to Unbelievers
  - B. Exhortation to Believers
  - C. Final Word from a Historian