

# The Resurrected Christ

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Just for a moment think of all the key world events in your lifetime. There has been the fall of the "Iron Curtain" and the literal fall of the Berlin Wall. We've seen the Persian Gulf war and the conflict in Bosnia. We have experienced the "El Nino" weather events.

Or go back a little further to the political crises of Watergate. The wonder and amazement of men actually landing on the moon. Or perhaps you can remember even back to World War II. Now go back further in history. The fall of the Bastille. The American Revolution. The discovery of the "New World." The invention of the printing press. The signing of the Magna Carta. The fall of the Roman Empire. Each of these events has made a significant impact on our world. But none of them has had the kind of monumental, world wide, and eternal significance that one event 2000 years ago claims to have. That event is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

*The most extravagant claim of Christianity is that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and is still alive. Humanity, from the very beginning of time has tried to defy and deny the reality of death. But only Jesus Christ has conquered it and deprived it of its terror over others (Hebrews 2:9, 14-18).*

Two important questions, however, are raised by the claim that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. First, did Christ's resurrection really occur? Secondly, what does it mean? What is the relevance of this past event to us today? In answer to the first question, "Did it really happen?" the Bible states clearly that it did. The book of Acts begins by declaring that Jesus

*...presented Himself alive after His sufferings by many infallible proofs,*

*being seen by them [the disciples] during forty days. (Acts 1:3 NKJV)*

References to the post resurrection appearances of Jesus Christ can be found in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20, Acts 1& 9 and 1 Corinthians 15.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was an objective, historical fact that has far more historical evidence for it than any event recorded in the ancient world. Indeed the event was datable. It occurred on the third day after his death. Here are two examples of what two highly respected historians have written about the evidence presented in the New Testament about Christ's life, death and resurrection:

"I claim to be an historian. My approach to the Classics is historical. And I tell you that the evidence for the life, the death, and the resurrection of Christ is better authenticated than most of the facts of ancient history." [E.M. Blaiklock, Professor of Classics, Auckland University].

"If the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt." [F.F. Bruce, Manchester University].

Granted that there is historical evidence for Christ's resurrection, the next question is, "Does it really matter whether it happened?" Let me say simply, it matters! Christ's resurrection is the only solid rock upon which a life of faith, hope and peace can be built. The resurrection validates Jesus' ministry, it assures us of forgiveness, it confirms God's power over the grave and His ultimate triumph over all His enemies. The apostle Paul put it all into perspective when he wrote,

*Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are*

*found false witness of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up – if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. (1 Corinthians 15:12-19)*

Christianity is Christ and Christ is nothing if he is still dead. The man and the mission of Jesus Christ are the rock upon which Christianity is built. If he is not who he said he is, and if he did not do what he said that he came to do, the very foundation of our faith crumbles. If Jesus Christ is not raised from the dead, the power of the gospel is gutted. Without his resurrection, our faith will never radically change our lives now, nor will we have any hope for the future. If the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a hoax, we are pitiable and pathetic people. But Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and because of this we can walk in newness of life. As Paul states,

*Therefore, we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also*

*should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4).*

Because Jesus Christ is alive and we are united to him, there is divine power in our lives, the very same power of God that raised Christ from the dead (Ephesians 1:19-21). And this power enables us to live a life of victory; having power to overcome sin in the present, and to rejoice in the hope of eternal life in the coming kingdom of God (Romans 6:5-14; 1 Corinthians 15:20-24).

A "Peanuts" cartoon pictured Lucy and Linus looking out the window at a steady downpour of rain. "Boy" said Lucy, "look at it rain. What if it floods the whole world?" "It will never do that," Linus replied confidently. "In the ninth chapter of Genesis, God promised Noah that would never happen again, and the sign of the promise is the rainbow." "You've taken a great load off my mind," said Lucy with a relieved smile. "Sound theology," said Linus, "has a way of doing that."

It is my prayer that the articles in this Spring issue of "The Unity of the Spirit" newsletter will provide you with the sound theology concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ, so that your life can be full of godly hope, joy and power as you live a life in service to him.