

The Resurrection: The Turning Point in History

A compilation



What mere human can choose his own birthplace? Or what mortal man can—or would—cause the officials of a foreign government to order his death by a terribly agonizing execution? How could anyone manipulate their bitter enemies to pay a specific price for their betrayal, mock and revile them as they are dying, much less cause a band of soldiers to gamble for their clothing and pierce their side after they've died, and cause a rich man to bury their body in his own personal tomb? Yet Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled not only these, but over 300 more specific predictions regarding His birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection. Truly He was—and is—"unique" in every sense of the word! Not one of the great recognized religious leaders—not Moses, not Buddha, not Confucius, not Mohammed—ever claimed to be God. True, some have been deified by their followers after they died, but none ever personally claimed to be deity.—That is, with the exception of Jesus Christ. In fact, He not only claimed to be the Son of God, God manifest in human flesh, but He convinced a great portion of the world that He in fact is God's Son.

There is no reason to doubt that after His death, something incredible happened which transformed His tiny band of dejected followers into a company of witnesses whom all the persecution of Imperial Rome could not stop. Downhearted and discouraged, their Lord cruelly crucified by His enemies, it looked to those disciples as if their hopes had died and their dreams had been shattered.

But three days after Jesus' death, their faith was rekindled in such a dramatic manner that no force on earth was able to quench it! And that lowly handful of His original followers went on to tell the entire world the Good News.—That God not only sent His Son into the world to teach us His truth and show us His love, but also that Jesus suffered death for our sake, and then rose from the grave.—So that we who know and believe on Him never need to fear death again, for we are saved and on our way to heaven, thanks to Jesus.

The New Testament also tells us that Jesus personally appeared to over 500 eyewitnesses after His resurrection.¹ This was the resounding message that His first disciples boldly proclaimed throughout the world: "God raised Him from the dead!"²—From "Who Is Jesus," TFI

Early Christianity was a "resurrection" movement through and through. ... To preach the Resurrection is to announce the fact that the world is a different place, and that we have to live in that "different-ness." The Resurrection is not just God doing a wacky miracle at one time. We have to preach it in a way that says this was the turning point in world history.—N. T. Wright

Belief in the resurrection is not an appendage to the Christian faith. It is the Christian faith.—George Carey, former Archbishop of Canterbury

Think of it! God sent His own Son, the very Lord of heaven, the master of the universe, down to earth to become one of us. He was miraculously conceived in the womb of a humble and lowly virgin named Mary, and took on the form of human flesh just like ours. Therefore He was the Son of Man as well as the Son of God.

Jesus not only adapted Himself to our bodily form, but He also conformed to our human ways of life, customs, language, dress, and living so that He might understand us better and be able to communicate with us on the lowly level of our human understanding. He became a citizen of this world, a member of humanity, a man of flesh, so that He might reach us with His love, prove to us His compassion and concern, and help us understand His message.

He came down and lived like us, worked like us, had to sleep like us, eat like us, and do everything that we have to do. There were times when He was weary, tired, and footsore, when He was hungry and thirsty, sad and discouraged. He became one of us, and as the Bible says, “was tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sinning.”³

Jesus spent His time going around everywhere doing good—feeding people who were hungry, healing those who were sick, cheering and comforting those who were sad and brokenhearted. He loved everybody, even the poorest of the poor, and those whom everybody else looked down on.

He never had any kind of religious buildings, denominations, or formal congregations. He simply went out and met people on the streets, by the seashore, in the marketplaces—wherever He could reach them—and shared His message of love with all who would listen to it. He befriended even the most despised and rejected members of society: tax collectors, drunks, prostitutes, and sinners.

His religion of love was so simple that He said, “You must become as a little child to receive it.”⁴

Jesus didn’t have to die on the cross. He said, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.”⁵

He was the Son of God, and all the powers of the universe were at His disposal, at His command. He told His captors, “You could have no power over Me at all unless it was given to you from My Father. . . . I could lift My little finger and thousands of angels would immediately deliver Me from your hand.”⁶ He could have called on all the forces of heaven to slaughter His enemies, conquer Rome, and take over the world. But instead, He chose to lay down His life for you and me.

Why would the King of kings, the Lord of the universe, God in the flesh, allow himself to be captured, falsely accused, tried and condemned, whipped, stripped, and nailed to a cross like a common criminal? The answer is simple—because He loved you and me!

Three days after His lifeless body was buried, something happened that shocked His enemies and proved to all of His followers that He really was the Son of God: He rose from the dead, the victor over death and hell forever!

After His resurrection, He personally appeared to literally hundreds of His followers, encouraging, strengthening, and comforting them. He told them that He was going to return to be with His heavenly Father, but that He would always be with them in spirit, living in their hearts forever. He also gave His followers a wonderful promise, that one day, “I will come again.” The Son of Man shall “come in the clouds, with power and great majesty.” —David Brandt Berg

Against the background of the modern predicament, the traditional Christian hope of the resurrection takes on an even greater brightness and significance. It tells man that he is no orphan after all, but the personal image of the Creator God of the universe; nor is his life doomed in death, for through the eschatological resurrection he may live in the presence of God forever.

This is a wonderful hope. But, of course, hope that is not founded in fact is not hope, but mere illusion. Why should the Christian hope of eschatological resurrection appear to modern man as anything more than mere wishful thinking? The answer lies in the Christian conviction that a man has been proleptically⁸ raised by God from the dead as the forerunner and exemplar of our own eschatological resurrection. That man was Jesus of Nazareth, and his historical resurrection from the dead constitutes

the factual foundation upon which the Christian hope is based.—William Lane Craig

The entire plan for the future has its key in the resurrection.—Billy Graham

I know the resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me. How? Because 12 men testified they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Everyone was beaten, tortured, stoned, and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren't true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world—and they couldn't keep a lie for three weeks. You're telling me 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40 years? Absolutely impossible.

—Charles Colson

See, then, the power of His resurrection—it proves without a doubt the faith once delivered to the saints. Supported by infallible proofs, it becomes itself the infallible proof of the authority, power, and glory of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God ... the power of our Lord's resurrection is an evidencing power ... a justifying power, a life-giving power, and a consoling power.—Charles H. Spurgeon

The blessings of the Gospel are substantial facts and not mere theological opinions. As the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead was a plain visible matter of fact, such is the evidencing power of the resurrection of Christ, that when every other argument fails your faith, you may find safe anchorage in this assured fact. The currents of doubt may bear you towards the rocks of mistrust. But when your anchor finds no other hold, it may grip the fact of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. This must be true. The witnesses are too many to have been deceived. And their patient deaths on account of their belief proved that they were not only honest men but good men who valued the Truth of God more than life. We know that Jesus rose from the dead—whatever else we are forced to question, we have no question on that score. We may be tossed about upon the sea in reference to other statements, but we step to shore again and find terra firma in this unquestionable, firmly established Truth—"The Lord is risen, indeed."—Charles H. Spurgeon

There is more evidence that Jesus rose from the dead than there is that Julius Caesar ever lived or that Alexander the Great died at the age of thirty-three.—Billy Graham

Historical argument alone cannot force anyone to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. But historical argument is remarkably good at clearing away the undergrowth behind which skepticisms of various sorts have been hiding. The proposal that Jesus was bodily raised from the dead possesses unrivaled power to explain the historical data at the heart of early Christianity.—N. T. Wright

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It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day.—Paul addressing Governor Felix, Acts 24:21

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