

Jesus and the Resurrection

Matthew 22:22-33

Introduction

It is crystal clear the Gospel writers knew Jesus believed and taught the resurrection of the dead.

In Matthew 22, we read, "The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: "Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her." Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." And when the multitudes heard *this*, they were astonished at His teaching." (Matthew 22:23-33)

The Sadducees ask Jesus a question about the resurrection, but they didn't even believe in the resurrection. Jesus calls out their hypocrisy. The only reason they asked a question about the resurrection is they knew Jesus believed and taught that there was a resurrection of the dead. Jesus told them that they were deceived, "not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God" (verse 29). Jesus affirmed that there would be a resurrection of the dead, whether the Sadducees believed it or not.

In Luke 14, He also taught that the righteous would be rewarded at the resurrection, and in John Chapter 5, He adds there would also be a judgment for the wicked. Jesus could certainly teach on the resurrection with authority since He did raise the dead. Matthew says He "taught with authority, and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:29). In Luke 7, He raised the widow's dead son (Luke 7:12-15), and in Mathew 9, he raised the ruler's dead daughter (Matthew 9:18-26). When Jesus sent the twelve disciples out, He commanded them to raise the dead (Matthew 10:7-8) When John the Baptist had doubts and sent some of his disciples to Jesus, seeking confirmation that He was the promised Messiah, " Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: *The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*" (Matthew 11:4-5)

But the most spectacular resurrection was that of Lazarus, just a few days before His crucifixion in Jerusalem (John 11:1-44). Jesus underscored His teaching on the resurrection of the dead with several examples during His earthly ministry. No wonder people found the teaching of a future resurrection believable.

Jesus also claimed that He would rise from the dead after three days. When He cleansed the temple in John Chapter 2, he said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2:19-22) Matthew says, "From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day." (Matthew 16:21)

Luke records Jesus saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day." (Luke 9:22)

In Mark 14, Jesus spoke again of His death and resurrection. And yet, we find that this prophecy of Jesus' resurrection is virtually missed or ignored by his disciples. Even at the very end, the disciples focused on Jesus' prophecy of His death and that they would be scattered instead of focusing on the resurrection. Maybe the words Jesus spoke were so shocking and distressing that they failed to hear the rest of Jesus' prophetic words that he would rise again. Had they believed Jesus would rise three days after His death, they would probably have responded differently. It's not that they refused to believe Jesus; they simply didn't hear what He was saying.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is even more specific about His death and resurrection. In John 10:18, Jesus says, "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father." (John 10:18)

What Jesus told His disciples privately, He also openly told those who opposed Him. At first, He did so in veiled statements that neither His enemies nor His disciples understood at the time (John 2:13-22). But as time passed, Jesus became much more direct in speaking of His resurrection. In Matthew 12, Jesus stakes His identity and authority as Messiah on His ability to rise from the dead. (Matthew 12:38-40) There is no doubt that the enemies of Christ understood that He claimed He would rise from the dead in three days.

Matthew 27 says, "On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard." (Matthew 27:62-66)

There are times when some unbelievers may grasp things that some Christians may not. How is it that the enemies of Jesus are more perceptive about the Lord's resurrection than the disciples? At least the enemies of Christ knew that Jesus

claimed He would rise from the grave in three days even though they didn't actually believe it would happen. They feared that His disciples would steal Jesus' body so that it would appear that He had risen from the dead. Sometimes unbelievers grasp what the Bible teaches quicker than some Christians do. (Maybe they can acknowledge something the Bible teaches because they feel no obligation to believe it.) I think we Christians are sometimes reluctant to "embrace" certain teachings in the Bible because, if we do, we know that we must also act on them.

I. The Dullness of the Disciples

It's troubling that His enemies remembered and understood Jesus' claim to rise again, while His own disciples seemed to forget His words about His resurrection completely. You can know so much about the Bible and still find yourself oblivious to its teaching. There is such an amazing dullness on the part of the disciples.

Mark points this out in Chapter 16, "Now when *He* rose early on the first *day* of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. She went and told those who had been with Him as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe. After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told *it* to the rest, *but* they did not believe them either. Later, He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen." (Mark 16:9-14)

John explains why the disciples were so reluctant to believe the reports of Jesus' resurrection, "Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. For as yet, they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again to their own homes." (John 20:8-10)

The fact that the disciples are reluctant to believe Jesus' resurrection makes the reality of it even more forceful. This is not something the disciples were quick to believe; they thought His resurrection was totally impossible until they were finally overwhelmed by the evidence. Their dullness and refusal to believe is further proof that the resurrection did occur. The disciples were not psychologically predisposed to believe Jesus had risen from the dead. All the evidence shows that they were completely devastated by Jesus' death, with no thought of His resurrection.

All of the disciples were just like Thomas; they all had to be convinced that Jesus was indeed alive. The only difference between Thomas and the other ten was that he wasn't present when Jesus appeared to the ten earlier.

II. Convincing the Doubtful Disciples

Obviously, the disciples' refusal to believe Jesus had been raised was because they did not as yet believe the Scriptures concerning the necessity of His resurrection (John 20:9). Luke's words help us understand how the disciples' changed their

minds and came to see the resurrection as an Old Testament prophecy and a necessary part of God's plan. Luke 24 says, "And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, **"Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."** (Luke 24:45-47)

Christ's resurrection was underscored by "many convincing proofs," witnessed by many people, taking place over many days. Acts 1:3 says, "to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." (Acts 1:3)

The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15, "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that, He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that, He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all, He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time." (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

III. The Resurrection Transformed the Disciples

What a dramatic change occurs in the disciples after they are convinced of His resurrection. Peter illustrates this remarkable turnaround when we compare his denial of Jesus at His crucifixion and his declaration of the gospel after Christ's ascension and the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost. Luke says, "Having arrested Him (Jesus), they led *Him* and brought Him into the high priest's house. But Peter followed at a distance. Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, "This man was also with Him." But he denied Him, saying, "Woman, I do not know Him." And after a little while, another saw him and said, "You also are of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, "Surely this *fellow* also was with Him, for he is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are saying!" Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, **"Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."** So Peter went out and wept bitterly." (Luke 22:54-62)

But after the resurrection, Acts 4:18 says, "So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:18-20)

Once they were convinced, the apostles saw themselves as witnesses of Christ's resurrection. In Acts 2:32, they said, "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses." (Acts 2:32)

In Acts 3:15, they said, "But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses." (Acts 3:14-15)

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead became a central and indispensable part of the gospel message they proclaimed.

Conclusion

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was a transforming truth for the disciples and those who believed their message. The same is true for us today. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the verification and vindication of Jesus' message and ministry. It verified that Jesus is God's promised Messiah, that He came to forgive us of our sins and provide us with the gift of eternal life.

The Apostle Paul says that if the resurrection is not valid, then our faith is in vain (1 Corinthians 15:12-19). The resurrection is an essential part of the gospel. To be saved, you must believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Romans 10:9-10 says, "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:9-10)

The resurrection is foolishness to non-believers, and there will always be those false teachers who deny the resurrection (Acts 17:17-18). When Paul was preaching Athens, some said, "What will this babbler say?" Acts 17:32 says, "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this *matter*." (Acts 17:32)

Whenever you share the gospel, some listen, and some don't.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is foundational to the spiritual life of the Christian. In Romans 6, Paul argues that the death and resurrection of Jesus requires that we die to our old way of life and live a new life in Christ (Romans 6:1-11). He says, "knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." (Romans 6:6)

Paul says that the Christian's problem is that sin is more powerful than our flesh, and so we experience constant defeat when we walk in the flesh (Romans 7:24). The answer to Paul's question, "Who will rescue me from this body of death?" is found in Romans 8:1, "*There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." (Romans 8:1)

Our flesh can always be overpowered by sin, but God has provided a way for us to live a new kind of life. His provision is the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit Who raised the dead body of Jesus Christ to life, and it is the same Spirit Who indwells every Christian.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ also plays a vital role in our witness and reach out to others. The Holy Spirit uses the resurrection of Christ to convince a person about their eternal existence and convert them so they can receive eternal life (John 16: 7-11). The empty tomb is a powerful witness of Christ's claims and the gospel He preached. Jesus told His disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit, who would convince the lost of sin, of righteousness, and judgment. He convicts of sin those who do not believe in Jesus. He convicts of Christ's righteousness because the tomb is empty.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is our assurance that we, too, will rise from the dead and live eternally in heaven with Him. There is no need to fear death when you have eternal life! That is the good news of the gospel. 2 Corinthians 4: 14 says we know that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus. Hebrews 2: 14 says, "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Hebrews 2: 14-15)

The resurrection is also our assurance that we will be reunited with our believing loved ones who have died before us. Paul tells the Thessalonians in Chapter 4, " But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord, Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18)

Jesus has risen from the grave, and He now is in heaven, at the right hand of the Father. But He will return, and when He does, we will be caught up in the air to spend all eternity with Christ and those we love who have loved Him. The resurrection is a strong warning for those who have rejected Him. Peter boldly stood before those who crucified Jesus and warned them that Jesus rose from the dead and that this same Jesus would return to judge all of those who have rejected Him. It is a sobering thought. The day of salvation is now. If you have never trusted in Jesus Christ as your Savior or accepted His only provision for your sins, I urge you to call upon Him today. Ask Jesus to save you and receive the forgiveness of your sins and the gift of eternal life He wants to give to you.