

Jesus Is Risen Indeed: Scholars use apologetics to prove Jesus rose from the dead. But you must know this by the Holy Spirit, not intellectual arguments

My life was transformed when I was baptized in the Holy Spirit on Oct. 31, 1955. This experience made me see how real Jesus is and how true the Bible is. It is also what held me to this very day to believe in the infallibility of holy Scripture.

I was trained at a theological seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, when it was very liberal. Few of the professors there at that time believed in the literal, physical, bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Many of these teachers even believed in process theology, which is camouflaged atheism in my opinion. It is now called open theism, and it is even embraced by many evangelicals and charismatics. Open theism is the most dangerous teaching to come into the charismatic movement and influence charismatic leaders in America and Britain.

If some readers wonder whether I spoke in tongues, I can tell you that for some reason this did not happen to me until February 1956, some three months later. But it happened unexpectedly and undoubtedly. It was so real.

Although my old denomination taught against it, as do many evangelicals and all cessationists today, I knew I could not deny my experience of speaking in tongues. And I never will.

I sometimes reckon there would not be a teaching of cessationism today were it not for the gift of tongues inserted by Paul into the nine gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. It is the only gift that challenges our pride. The baptism of the Holy Spirit did several things for me:

It gave me instant peace and joy that words cannot adequately describe. It is what Charles Wesley called the "second rest" in his hymn "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling." (Wesley based this on Jesus' words in Matthew 11:29b, "You will find rest for your souls.")

It gave me full assurance of my salvation. Until then, owing to my old church background, I was afraid of losing my salvation every time I did something wrong. I knew on that day, 67 years ago, I would never doubt my salvation again, and I never have.

It changed my theology permanently within hours. This pertained largely to the teaching of the sovereignty of God, which I describe in some of my books.

It convinced me forever that Jesus was literally raised from the dead. I will return to this later.

I saw that Jesus was a real man. I am sure I was taught that theoretically before then. All I can say is, seeing that Jesus' being a *real man*—truly and fully man as well as God—gripped me to no end. A verse like 1 Timothy 2:5b (ESV, emphasis added), "There is one mediator between God and men, the *man* Christ Jesus" became very precious to me.

It persuaded me that the intercession of Jesus for me at the right hand of God was literal and real. This would later become a vital part of my theology.

I saw that without doubt the Second Coming of Jesus is absolutely true! I was so excited to see and know that He

really is coming again.

My reason for detailing these items is this: I believe God wants us to believe in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead *supernaturally*—by the Word and the Spirit. Not by reason or logical argument.

The same is true in how we believe the Bible to be the Word of God. “Defend the Bible? I would as soon defend a lion,” said Charles Spurgeon. We believe the Bible is the Word of God not because of intellectual arguments but by the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit.

Our Faith Is Not Based on Intellectual Arguments

I do not deny that there is a place for apologetics in Christian theology. But apologetics deals with *objections* to the faith; rarely is a person converted by hearing someone defending the faith.

People are generally converted by the aggressive preaching of the gospel: that Jesus died, satisfying God’s wrath and justice by His precious blood and then rising from the dead.

In fact, my beloved and respected predecessor at Westminster Chapel, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, always said that one of the worst things to happen in the earliest church was the introduction of apologetics in the second century by some of the apostolic fathers. He felt it gave rise to a lifeless Christianity.

T.F. Torrance has shown that there was virtually no doctrine of grace taught in the apostolic fathers; Christianity had become a teaching of morality and good works.

The New Testament shows again and again that people are converted by the Word and Spirit at work simultaneously. The Resurrection of Jesus vindicated the Word. People laughed Jesus to scorn when he said, “Destroy this temple, and in

three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19b).

The Jews threw this up later, claiming Jesus was referring to the Temple Mount, as reason to show that He was a fraud (Matt. 27:62-64).

But John gave the real explanation of Jesus' words: "But [Jesus] was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken" (John 2:21-22).

Jesus was intent on defending the Scriptures. The Scripture during His life on earth was the Old Testament. One of the most disappointing translations of Psalm 138:2 appears in virtually every modern translation. The King James Version got it right: "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."

There is fortunately a footnote in the ESV that quotes the Hebrew. I don't understand why modern scholars chose to gloss over the Hebrew in Psalm 138:2. Is it because they think David was not giving enough honor to God's name? Granted, God cares about His name.

His name refers to His power and reputation. But it happens that God cares more about His Word—His integrity and honesty.

God will vindicate His name one day. Oh yes, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Rom. 14:11, Phil. 2:9-11).

God will then explain the reason He allowed evil and suffering, as promised to Habakkuk (Hab.2:1-4). But He can wait for that! So must we. What our heavenly Father wants in the meantime is for His people to revere His Word.

The Resurrection of Jesus from the dead is a vindication of His Word. Why do you suppose God raised Jesus from the dead when there was no one to see it happen? Answer: He wanted it

to be believed because of His Word.

The angels said to the women at the empty tomb on Easter morning, "Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise" (Luke 24:6b-7, ESV). Then comes this moving and never-to-be-forgotten comment by Luke: "And they remembered his words" (Luke 24:8).

As the two men on the road to Emmaus put it, after realizing they had been with the living Christ for a few moments on Easter Sunday: "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us on the road, while he opened unto us the Scriptures?" (Luke 24:32).

Later Jesus appeared to His disciples and said to them: "These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44).

Some might say, "But [the two men] had Jesus himself with them, who had been raised from the dead, to give to them that direct Word." True. But we have the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit of God who will reveal the same word of God to us. Jesus "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45).

That is exactly what the Holy Spirit does. He wants us to believe in the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead by believing the Scriptures. After all, the Holy Spirit's greatest product is the Bible. Holy men of old spoke as they were "carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21b). "All Scripture is breathed out by God" (2 Tim. 3:16a).

But it is the Holy Spirit—not external "proofs" that we might look for—who will make us see that Jesus was truly and literally, bodily and physically, on a date in history and a place on the map, raised from the dead.

The Spirit vindicates His Word, which in turn points us to the resurrected Jesus.

Do You Believe Jesus Rose From the Dead?

By the way, vindication is God's prerogative. "Vengeance is mine," says the Lord (Deut. 32:35a). I could add to my previously mentioned testimony that I have learned this the hard way. I could also add another thing my Spirit baptism did: It led to a long separation between my dad and me.

There are two kinds of vindication: external and internal. External vindication is when people openly vindicate you; they say, "You are absolved from blame. You have got it right. You were falsely accused."

This is the kind of vindication we all like. I wanted it for years and years because my own dad, disappointed with my change of theology, said to me in 1956, "Son, you have broken with God." Twenty-two years later—in 1978—he said to me, "Son, you were right and I was wrong. I am proud of you." Yes, external vindication is sweet and worth waiting for.

Are you looking for vindication? Have you taken a stand that many disagree with? You are lonely. It hurts. Caution: Don't try to compete with the expert.

Vindication is God's prerogative, and His alone. If I have learned anything from 65 years of ministry, it is this: Don't trespass on His territory. The vindicating business belongs to Him. There is a sign on it that says, "No trespassing allowed." If you want to be a fool, step on His territory. It will backfire on you and postpone vindication.

We are talking about external vindication. When friends see. When enemies see. When relatives see. When the world sees. "The Lord will vindicate his people" (Deut. 32:36a). He loves to do it. He wants to do it—but His way. In His time.

Jesus has never had an external vindication. Yet. The Bible has never had an external vindication. Yet. This will come—on the last day. The final day.

Even your vindication and mine are not promised or guaranteed to take place in this life. They can. And they often do.

I can remember when I was in a dark hour at Westminster Chapel. Some leaders in the church turned against me and were a bit cruel. In a dark hour, rightly or wrongly, I opened my Bible for a “word.” I turned to 2 Thessalonians 1:6: “God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you.”

I thought, *Oh, good!* But I kept reading; my heart sank when I saw that this will surely happen “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire” (vv. 7b-8a).

Oh no! But yes. There is no guarantee of vindication or vengeance in this life. Sometimes it happens, but not always.

I can tell you what you *can* have in this life: internal vindication. It is what Jesus had. Would that be good enough for you? It is a genuine opportunity—even invitation—to be like Jesus.

This is because Jesus’ vindication was not external but internal. He was “vindicated by the Spirit” (1 Tim. 3:16b). What does that mean? Jesus heard the Father speak into His heart, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matt.3:17b, 17:5b). He knew the Jews rejected Him.

There was no vindication from Pharisees! He knew why they missed Him entirely as their promised Messiah.

Jesus put it in a question: “How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?” (John 5:44). He, however, wanted

only the glory and praise that came from His Father.

That is what He enjoyed for 33 years—and after. After? Yes: both after His Resurrection and after Pentecost.

When Jesus was raised from the dead, did He go to Herod's door on Easter morning and say, "Surprise!" Or to the house of Pontius Pilate—to prove Himself? No. His vindication was not external, but internal.

This is *still* the way Jesus is vindicated. You and I do it. We vindicate Him. How? By affirming Him as Lord. No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3).

It is by the enabling work of the Spirit of God that you and I vindicate Him. In other words, Jesus is—to this day—vindicated by the Spirit.

One Day, Everyone Will Know Jesus Is Lord

But His day will come! You will see it. I will see it. Not only that, but the world will see it. He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him. All the tribes of the earth will wail when they see Him (Rev.1:7), vindicating Him. People will not worry then what others will think.

That is also when the Bible will be vindicated. The same people who have held the Bible with utter contempt will be the ones who weep and wail and gnash their teeth. They will discover—not by faith but by direct sight—that the Bible is true.

Heaven is real. Hell is real. Jesus is God. Jesus is man. What a day that will be.

In the meantime, you and I are better off not to wait or hope for the external vindication that we could understandably wish for. I can't blame anyone for looking for apologetical proof of the Resurrection. But even that will not fully satisfy or

necessarily lead one to being born again.

It is a fact that a famous rabbi in Jerusalem said several years ago that he believed that Jesus of Nazareth was raised from the dead, but he was not going to convert. He continued to stay outside the company of Christians and would not say that Jesus is the God-man.

God values His Word. He wants His integrity affirmed: what He has written by the Holy Spirit. What His beloved Son said while He walked physically on this earth.

It is when the Word is joined by the Spirit that we see with full assurance that the Bible is true and trustworthy and that Jesus Christ was indeed raised from the dead on Easter morning and now is seated in power and authority at the right hand of God the Father.

Yes, there is a man in glory, seen only when the Holy Spirit opens our eyes. As Jesus opened the eyes of the disciples, let us pray—fervently and earnestly—that He will open our eyes so that the Resurrection will be vindicated as God has been pleased to vindicate it: by the Scriptures.

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