

6 Ways to Reflect on Jesus' Supernatural Resurrection

For the true Christian, death is not the end to life but the transition to the next!

We are eternal beings. The Scriptures not only teach the immortality of the soul but also of the body—in a resurrected, glorified form.

It is this unique doctrine of the Resurrection that Christians reaffirm every Easter and that I would like to pursue with you in a series of teachings from 1 Corinthians 15. There may be some other emphases as we endure the pandemic-pandemonium around us. But, by and large, I plan to remind us of some Resurrection realities as taught by the apostle Paul.

You might like to read ahead, in this basic outline of thought. Maybe use a modern translation or paraphrase to shake loose from years of Sunday school lessons or pastoral preaching on this familiar theme.

- The Importance of the Resurrection (15:1-11).
- The Necessity of the Resurrection (15:12-19).
- The Assurance of the Resurrection (15:20-28).
- The Nature of the Resurrected Body (15:35-58).

Resurrection Reality No. 1: The Importance of the Resurrection

As I've said, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the cornerstone of Christianity. The Christian faith is not based primarily on the *teachings* of Jesus, the *life* of Jesus, the *miracles* of Jesus, the *promises* of Jesus or even the *death* of Jesus.

The Christian faith is based on *all of these*, culminating in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Paul taught that our belief in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is essential to salvation. He told the Romans, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

Further evidence of the importance of the resurrection of Christ is that it is mentioned more than 100 times in the New Testament. It is the most profound and prominent point in the apostolic preaching in the primitive church (see Acts 2:22-24, 32; 3:14-15; 4:8-12; 5:27-32; 10:34-43; 13:26-39).

The Gospel in a Nutshell

At first, the Resurrection was the focal point in the verbal proclamation of the gospel—for a quarter-century. As the Jewish Messianic congregations grew in size and number and the Gentiles were evangelized in their cultural settings, the apostles preached these prominent truths as the gospel, or Good News of Jesus, the anointed one from Nazareth, in Galilee.

Paul reminded the Corinthians in writing of his teaching about the importance of the resurrection of Jesus.

"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: how Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

Paul said that these fundamental truths about our Lord's death, burial and Resurrection are the very grounds of their (and our) salvation. They are the essence of the Good News of Jesus Christ—the gospel in a nutshell. Furthermore, "you are saved if you hold fast that word which I preached to you" (1 Cor. 15:2b, NKJV).

The gospel is about more than the forgiveness of sins, which is affirmed by the Resurrection of our Lord and evidenced by a transformed lifestyle of godly obedience (Rom. 12:1-2). Ultimately, the gospel includes the subsequent renewal of all creation, in the world to come, in God's eternal kingdom!

The doctrine of the Resurrection of the body was contrary to the teachings of the pagan intellectuals of Corinth (and this 21st-century thereafter). Their Greek mindset allowed for an afterlife for the spirit of man, but not for the body. For them, the body was corrupt and subject to disease and decay, and we had no further use for it after we die. They scoffed at the thought of living forever in a resurrected, glorified body.

The Proof of the Resurrection

After stressing the *prominence of the Resurrection* in the Christian's belief system, Paul underscored the *proof of the Resurrection*: eyewitnesses! For over 40 days after His resurrection, Jesus revealed himself to Cephas (Peter), then the 12 and over 500 believing brethren at once.

He was also seen by his half-brother James and the other apostles (1 Cor. 15:5-7). For some reason, Paul did not mention the very first eyewitness, Mary Magdalene, in the garden at the empty tomb (John 20:11-18).

Those post-Resurrection appearances all occurred before our Lord's ascension to heaven (see Acts 1:9-11). There was one important appearance that occurred afterward—that was to Saul of Tarsus, later named Paul (see Acts 9 and 1 Cor. 15:8-10).

Paul told the Corinthians that he was "born out of due time" (v. 8b), which is an expression meaning he was born as an aborted fetus, incapable of sustaining life. Such a humble view of oneself gives a genuine appreciation of God's grace (v. 10) and an honest appreciation for all who preach the gospel and see souls saved (v. 11).

Private Reflections From Resurrection Realities

I will close this first Lenten lesson from 1 Corinthians 15 by asking you a few questions, drawn from these last verses of the apostle's private reflection:

–How do you feel about your “past”—before you became a believer?

–Is it possible you may currently see some subtle pride in your life?

–If so, is it growing or diminishing? Read James 4:7-10.

–Do you daily acknowledge God's grace (unmerited favor) in your life?

–Can you name three things for which you are thankful this Lenten season?

–How can you improve in showing honest appreciation for the work or ministry of others?

These are important reflections on the importance of our Lord's Resurrection! See you next time, to review together 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 and the necessity of the Resurrection.

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