

# DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

## Lesson 20 The Resurrection

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The resurrection is one of the foundational and essential doctrines of the Christian faith. A false view of the resurrection leads to an avalanche of other false doctrines. The topic of resurrection has many facets which could be studied. There is the resurrection of Christ, which we will study in this lesson, the resurrection of believers, the resurrection of unbelievers, Old Testament texts on the resurrection, New Testament texts on the resurrection, and the many doctrinal implications of these various resurrection topics. In this lesson we will attempt to focus on the resurrection of Christ and seek to discover the practical significance of these truths for the believer today.

### I. DEFINITIONS OF THE RESURRECTION

- A. *Pocket Dictionary of Theology*: “The central, defining doctrine and claim of the Christian faith is the resurrection of Jesus Christ, whom God brought forth from the dead. The resurrection of the dead refers to the promise based on the bodily resurrection of Jesus, that all believers will one day join Christ in the resurrection. Believers will be transformed, that is, renewed both morally and physically with “spiritual” bodies adapted for eternal life with God.”<sup>1</sup>
- B. *Easton’s Bible Dictionary*: “Resurrection of Christ [is] one of the cardinal facts and doctrines of the gospel. If Christ be not risen, our faith is vain (1 Cor. 15:14). The whole of the New Testament revelation rests on this as an historical fact. On the day of Pentecost, Peter argued the necessity of Christ’s resurrection from the prediction in Ps. 16 (Acts 2:24-28). In his own discourses, also, our Lord clearly intimates his resurrection (Matt. 20:19; Mark 9:9; 14:28; Luke 18:33; John 2:19-22).
- The evangelists give circumstantial accounts of the facts connected with that event, and the apostles, also, in their public teaching largely insist upon it. Ten different appearances of our risen Lord are recorded in the New Testament.”<sup>2</sup>
- C. A resurrection is an act of God whereby He causes someone who has died to come to life again physically. The resurrection of Christ was unique in that He was raised with a glorified body fit for eternity.

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<sup>1</sup>Stanley Grenz, David Guretzki and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 102.

<sup>2</sup>M.G. Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996, c1897).

## II. THOUGHTS TO PONDER

- A. *The New Bible Dictionary*: “The Christological significance of the resurrection is considerable. The fact that Jesus prophesied that he would rise from the dead on the third day has important implications for his Person. One who could do this is greater than the sons of men. Paul clearly regards the resurrection of Christ as of cardinal importance. ‘If Christ has not been raised,’ he says, ‘then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain. . . . If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins’ (1 Cor. 15:14, 17). The point is that Christianity is a gospel, it is good news about how God sent his Son to be our Saviour. But if Christ did not really rise, then we have no assurance that our salvation has been accomplished. The reality of the resurrection of Christ is thus of deep significance.”<sup>3</sup>
- B. Consider some of the implications of denying the resurrection of Christ. If Christ did not rise from the dead then the Old Testament prophets were liars, since they predicted the resurrection; the Jews were deceived, since they taught and believed the resurrection; Jesus was a liar, since He said He would rise again after being killed and must have faked His death since many people saw him after his crucifixion; the apostles were liars, since they testified that Christ rose from the dead; the hundreds of people who personally saw Christ after his resurrection were liars; hundreds have been murdered, tortured and martyred defending the lie of the resurrection; the Scriptures are full of errors as they constantly attest to the resurrection and hence can not be trusted; we are still in our sins, Christ had no victory over death; Christianity is a farce; we have no hope, Christ cannot save us; and if Christ was not raised, the Apostle Paul says, “*we are of all men most to be pitied.*”
- C. The Scripture speaks of Christ as **the first fruits of the dead**, and **the first born from the dead (I Cor. 15:20, 23; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5)**. How can this be since there were other resurrections recorded in both the Old Testament and the New Testament before Christ was raised?
- D. John Walvoord: “It is inevitable that anyone who denies the resurrection also denies the inspiration of Scripture and usually it is also true that those who deny the inspiration of Scripture deny the bodily resurrection of Christ. The two are linked as are many other important doctrines of Biblical faith. The fact of the resurrection of Christ remains a pillar of the Christian faith without which the edifice soon totters and falls.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *The New Bible Dictionary*, Logos Bible Software, under “resurrection.”

<sup>4</sup> *Bibliotheca Sacra* Volume 120 (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1963; 2002), 120:299.

**III. SCRIPTURAL PROOF OF CHRIST’S RESURRECTION, ASCENSION, AND EXALTATION**

**A. Resurrection Predicted**

**1. Psa. 16:10 cf. Luke 24:44-46 (also Acts 13:34-35)**

<b>Psa. 16:10</b>	<b>Luke 24:44-46</b>	<b>Acts 13:34-35</b>
<p>10 For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.</p>	<p>44 Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,</p>	<p>34 “As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.’ 35 “Therefore He also says in another Psalm, ‘You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.’</p>

2. **Mk. 8:31 (also Mk. 9:31; 10:34)** And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.
3. **Jn. 2:19** Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”
4. **Jn. 10:17** For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. 18 No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.
5. **Jn. 11:20-25** Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house. 21 Martha then said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 “Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.” 23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” 24 Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” 25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,

## B. Resurrection of Christ Fulfilled

### 1. Survey the parallel resurrection accounts below

<b>Mt. 28:1-7</b>	<b>Mk. 16:1-7</b>	<b>Lk. 24:1-8, 12</b>	<b>Jn. 20:1-10</b>
<p>Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. 2 And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. 3 And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4 The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. 5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. 6 "He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. 7 "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you."</p>	<p>When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him. 2 Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. 3 They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" 4 Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. 5 Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. 6 And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him. 7 "But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.'"</p>	<p>But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. 2 And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; 5 and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? 6 "He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, 7 saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." 8 And they remembered His words, 12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.</p>	<p>Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. 2 So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." 3 So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb. 4 The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first; 5 and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in. 6 And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, 7 and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. 8 So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed. 9 For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. 10 So the disciples went away again to their own homes.</p>

2. **Acts 4:33** And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.
3. **Rom. 1:1-4** Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son, . . . 4 who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord.

#### 4. **Post Resurrection Appearances of Christ<sup>5</sup>**

- a. *To Mary Magdalene* at the sepulchre alone. This is recorded at length only by John (20:11-18), and alluded to by Mark (16:9-11).
- b. *To certain women*, “the other Mary,” Salome, Joanna, and others, as they returned from the sepulchre. Matthew (28:1-10) alone gives an account of this. (Comp. Mark 16:1-8, and Luke 24:1-11.)
- c. *To Simon Peter* alone on the day of the resurrection. (See Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5.)
- d. *To the two disciples on the way to Emmaus* on the day of the resurrection, recorded fully only by Luke (24:13-35. Comp. Mark 16:12, 13).
- e. *To the ten disciples* (Thomas being absent) and others “with them,” at Jerusalem on the evening of the resurrection day. One of the evangelists gives an account of this appearance, John (20:19-24).
- f. *To the disciples again* (Thomas being present) at Jerusalem (Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:33-40; John 20:26-28. See also 1 Cor. 15:5).
- g. *To the disciples* when fishing at the Sea of Galilee. Of this appearance also John (21:1-23) alone gives an account.
- h. *To the eleven*, and above 500 brethren at once, at an appointed place in Galilee (1 Cor. 15:6; comp. Matt. 28:16-20).
- i. *To James*, but under what circumstances we are not informed (1 Cor. 15:7).
- j. *To the apostles* immediately before the ascension. They accompanied him from Jerusalem to Mount Olivet, and there they saw him ascend ‘till a cloud received him out of their sight’ (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-52; Acts 1:4-10).

It is worthy of note that it is distinctly related that on most of these occasions our Lord afforded his disciples the amplest opportunity of testing the fact of his resurrection. He conversed with them face to face. They touched him (Matt. 28:9; Luke 24:39; John 20:27), and he ate bread with them (Luke 24:42, 43; John 21:12, 13).

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<sup>5</sup>The section below is a slightly modified portion from Easton's Bible Dictionary (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996, c1897). The

- k. *Christ's manifestation of himself to Paul at Damascus, who speaks of it as an appearance of the risen Saviour (Acts 9:3-9, 17; 1 Cor. 15:8; 9:1).*

### C. **Significance of the Resurrection**

1. **Acts 4:2** being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.
2. **Acts 17:18** And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.
3. **I Cor. 15:1-19** Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. 11 Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. 12 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? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; 14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. 15 Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; 17 and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.
4. **I Pet. 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

5. **I Pet. 3:21** Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

#### IV. **ERRORS CONCERNING CHRIST'S RESURRECTION, ASCENSION, AND EXALTATION**

- A. Christ did not rise from the dead (e.g. I Cor. 15:12-19; II Tim. 2:16-18).
- B. Christ was only spiritually alive after he died and had no body (I Jn. 1:1-3).
- C. Christ was raised with the same physical body.
- D. Christ was not the first born from the dead or the first fruits of the resurrection because others were resurrected before him.
- E. Christ didn't rise from the dead, he merely fainted on the cross, was thought to be dead, woke up in the tomb and people merely thought He had risen from a faint.
- F. The disciples snuck past the Roman guards while they were sleeping, quietly rolled the stone away, and took the body of Jesus to make it look like Jesus rose from the dead.

**The resurrection is not denied because the evidence is regarded as insufficient, but the evidence is rejected and repudiated because the resurrection is denied. A resurrection is regarded as impossible and little attempt is made to explain away the evidence on which it rests. But the improbability of supernaturalism is one of the most arrogant assumptions ever made. It takes for granted what still needs to be proved. Such a method is utterly unscientific. The true scientific method is to examine the facts and then form a theory; not first form a theory and then flout and repudiate and deny the facts.**  
(W. Graham Scrogie, as quoted by Oswald Sanders in his work *The Incomparable Christ*, pg. 212.)

#### V. **APPLICATION OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION, ASCENSION, AND EXALTATION**

- A. Because Christ was raised from the dead we too will be raised just like He was.
- B. Because of the resurrection of Christ we can have hope for the future.
- C. Because Christ was raised we don't need to fear death.

- D. Because Christ rose from the dead we know we serve a living Savior who will one day physically and bodily return to earth.
  
- E. Because Christ was resurrected from the dead we know that when we get to heaven we will be like Him as He will be a resurrected man like us.

**“The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins.” — Matthew 9:6**

Behold one of the great Physician’s mightiest arts: he has power to forgive sin! While here he lived below, before the ransom had been paid, before the blood had been literally sprinkled on the mercy-seat, he had power to forgive sin. Hath he not power to do it now that he hath died? What power must dwell in him who to the utmost farthing has faithfully discharged the debts of his people! He has boundless power now that he has finished transgression and made an end of sin. If ye doubt it, see him rising from the dead! behold him in ascending splendour raised to the right hand of God! Hear him pleading before the eternal Father, pointing to his wounds, urging the merit of his sacred passion! What power to forgive is here! “He hath ascended on high, and received gifts for men.” “He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins.” The most crimson sins are removed by the crimson of his blood. At this moment, dear reader, whatever thy sinfulness, Christ has power to pardon, power to pardon thee, and millions such as thou art. A word will speak it. He has nothing more to do to win thy pardon; all the atoning work is done. He can, in answer to thy tears, forgive thy sins today, and make thee know it. He can breathe into thy soul at this very moment a peace with God which passeth all understanding, which shall spring from perfect remission of thy manifold iniquities. Dost thou believe that? I trust thou believest it. Mayst thou experience now the power of Jesus to forgive sin! Waste no time in applying to the Physician of souls, but hasten to him with words like these:—

“Jesus! Master! hear my cry;  
Save me, heal me with a word;  
Fainting at thy feet I lie,  
Thou my whisper’d plaint hast heard.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Charles Spurgeon, Morning and Evening, evening August 10th, Logos Bible Software.