

## **What is more important: the death of Christ or His resurrection?**

The most important series of events in the history of the world was the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus. By means of His death, Jesus fulfilled prophecy and bought man's freedom from slavery to sin. By means of His burial, Jesus removed any doubt that He had really died. By means of His resurrection, Jesus proved He had power over death.

The death and resurrection of Christ are equally important. Jesus' death and resurrection accomplish separate but necessarily related things. The death and resurrection of our Lord are inseparable.

The cross of Christ won for us the victory that we could never have won for ourselves. "Having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Colossians 2:15). On the cross, God piled our sins on Jesus, and He bore the punishment due us (Isaiah 53:4-8). In His death, Jesus took upon Himself the curse introduced by Adam (Galatians 3:13).

With the death of Christ, our sins became powerless to rule over us (Romans 6). By His death, Jesus destroyed the works of the devil (John 12:31; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8), condemned Satan (John 16:11), and crushed the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15).

Without the sacrificial death of Christ, we would still be in our sins, unforgiven, unredeemed, unsaved, and unloved. The cross of Christ is vital to our salvation and was thus the main theme of the apostles' Paul preaching (1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2; Galatians 6:14).

But the story of Jesus Christ did not end with His death. The resurrection of Christ is also foundational to the gospel message. Our salvation stands or falls based on the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, as Paul makes clear in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19. If Christ is not physically risen from the dead, then we ourselves have no hope of resurrection, the apostles' preaching was in vain, and believers are all to be pitied. Without the resurrection, we are still sitting "in darkness and in the shadow of death" waiting for the sunrise (Luke 1:78-79).

Because of Jesus' resurrection, our great enemy, death, is defeated (1 Corinthians 15:26, 54-55). Jesus' resurrection is also important because it is through that event

that God declares us righteous: Jesus “was raised to life for our justification” (Romans 4:25). The gift of the Holy Spirit was sent from the resurrected and ascended Lord Jesus (John 16:7).

At least three times in His earthly ministry, Jesus predicted that He would die and rise again after three days (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34). If Jesus Christ had not been raised from the dead, He would have failed in His prophecies. He would have been another false prophet to be ignored. As it is, however, we have a living Lord, faithful to His Word. The angel at Jesus’ empty tomb was able to point to fulfilled prophecy: “He is not here; He has risen, just as He said” (Matthew 28:6).

Scripture links the death and resurrection of Christ, and we must maintain that link. Jesus’ entrance into the tomb is as equally important as His exit from the tomb. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-5, Paul defines the gospel as the dual truth that Jesus died for our sins (proved by His burial) and that He rose again the third day (proved by His appearances to many witnesses). This gospel truth is “of first importance” (v. 3).

It is impossible to separate the death of Christ from His resurrection. To believe in one without the other is to believe in a false gospel that cannot save. For Jesus to have truly arisen from the dead, He must have truly died. And for His death to have a true meaning for us, He must have a true resurrection. We cannot have one without the other.