

Easter

Paul tells us about the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8a CEV

My friends, I want you to remember the message that I preached and that you believed and trusted. You will be saved by this message, if you hold firmly to it. But if you don't, your faith was all for nothing.

I told you the most important part of the message exactly as it was told to me. That part is:

Christ died for our sins, as the Scriptures say. He was buried, and three days later he was raised to life, as the Scriptures say.

Christ appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. After this, he appeared to more than five hundred other followers. Most of them are still alive, but some have died. He also appeared to James, and then to all of the apostles. Finally, he appeared to me

This morning how many of us are certain of eternal life?

We obtain this miraculous gift by giving our lives to Jesus and believing in him.

John 3:16-18 CEV tells us:

God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn its people. He sent him to save them!

No one who has faith in God's Son will be condemned. But everyone who doesn't have faith in him has already been condemned for not having faith in God's only Son.

Why?

John 14:6,7 gives us the answer...

I am the way, the truth, and the life!" Jesus answered. "Without me, no one can go to the Father. If you had known me, you would have known the Father. But from now on, you do know him, and you have seen him."

That "Faith" is actually the word believe and is a present tense participle... In short, if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved... Nothing else is required...

Do you believe that there are those, perhaps even someone here today that there is nothing after death. After all that is what the Sadducees believed...

Even Job asked the question...

Turn with me to Job 14:14-17 NLT

Can the dead live again?

If so, this would give me hope through all my years of struggle, and I would eagerly await the release of death. You would call and I would answer, and you would yearn for me, your handiwork. For then you would guard my steps, instead of watching for my sins. My sins would be sealed in a pouch, and you would cover my guilt.

Even when Jesus walked the earth, people still questioned the message of eternal life. I mentioned the Sadducees earlier... Let's dig a little into that topic for a minute or two.

Turn with me to Luke 20:27 NLT

Then Jesus was approached by some Sadducees—religious leaders who say there is no resurrection from the dead.

So here is biblical proof of the sect of the Sanhedrin that did not subscribe to the possibility of life after death. Let's look a bit more into this...

Ever wonder about Jesus take on this doctrine? Stay with me and let's look at what happens in the next passage of scripture.

Luke 8:49-55 NLT

While he was still speaking to her, a messenger arrived from the home of Jairus, the leader of the synagogue. He told him, "Your daughter is dead. There's no use troubling the Teacher now."

But when Jesus heard what had happened, he said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid. Just have faith, and she will be healed."

When they arrived at the house, Jesus wouldn't let anyone go in with him except Peter, John, James, and the little girl's father and mother. The house was filled with people weeping and wailing, but he said, "Stop the weeping! She isn't dead; she's only asleep."

But the crowd laughed at him because they all knew she had died. Then Jesus took her by the hand and said in a loud voice, "My child, get up!" And at that moment her life returned, and she immediately stood up! Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat.

If death is the end, where did her life return from?

Clear Jesus is not bound by the limitations of life and death. The grave couldn't keep him!

John 11:25,26a NLT

Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die.

If death is the end, why today do we have people coming back from the dead after hours or days? Why do some of them speak about conversations with Jesus? It's not like it was a dream... They were DEAD.

There have always been those who would decry the doctrine of resurrection. As we saw with the Sadducees this is not a new thing. Initially several of the Greek people in the church at Corinth did not believe in the resurrection. Paul deals with this in a most straight-forward manner.

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 15:1-14 NLT

Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News I preached to you before. You welcomed it then, and you still stand firm in it. It is this Good News that saves you if you continue to believe the message I told you—unless, of course, you believed something that was never true in the first place.

I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him. For I am the least of all the apostles. In fact, I'm not even worthy to be called an apostle after the way I persecuted God's church.

But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor on me—and not without results. For I have worked harder than any of the other apostles; yet it was not I but God who was working through me by his grace. So it makes no difference whether I preach or they preach, for we all preach the same message you have already believed.

But tell me this—since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead? For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless.

Paul is clear and doesn't mix words with the church at Corinth. This is the most important topic in the bible. In fact, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:1-3 NKJV

And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

What Paul is saying here is that he wasn't trying to bamboozle them with persuasive words or elegant speech, he was trying to point out that knowing who Jesus really is and how we are saved are the most primary of all our doctrines. They are essential for our salvation.

To overcome their doubt the apostle Paul offers up four evidences:

1. 1 Corinthians 15:2a

"It is this Good News that saves you if you continue to believe the message I told you"

Paul has clearly told them that they must continue to believe in Jesus. Now remember that Paul had already preached to the people at Corinth and he was speaking to those who accepted Christ and been saved. What we see as his first evidence is succinct in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NLT

Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Let's make sure this is totally clear here. Paul is saying that there is no way a dead God could change them in the way that they had experienced... He wants them to explain how they were able to change if Jesus were dead.

This same Jesus who raised from the dead and sits at the right hand of the Father still changes people, still washes people clean and still restores people into good stead with the Father. He has paid the price for you in his blood. He has taken your place.

Jesus is making people new everyday, 2000 years after his time here on earth. 2 Corinthians 5:15-18 says:

He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them. So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him.

2. Paul provides more evidence of the resurrection.

Paul points the Christians to the Old Testament Scriptures, which predicted his death and resurrection many times.

In the book of Psalms chapter 2 verses 2-4 we read:

The kings of the earth prepare for battle; the rulers plot together against the Lord and against his anointed one. (Jesus) "Let us break their chains," they cry, "and free ourselves from slavery to God." But the one who rules in heaven laughs. The Lord scoffs at them.

Why when they are trying to plot against his Son was God laughing?

God knows it is not the end of the story. He knows that the enemy will tear down and destroy His Son and that he will ultimately lay down his life through the shedding of his blood.

God has the last laugh at Satan. Hell rejoiced for three days. Jesus was put to death, they had foiled God's great redemptive plan. But God laughed...

Let's open some more scripture...

Turn with me to Isaiah 53:3-12 CEV

He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked— But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.

He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.

Do you believe he was talking about Jesus? I do. This prophet told of the events of the messiah's life. It is an incredibly accurate description of the death and resurrection of Jesus. We see here a picture of the death of Christ, but we also see the Lord alive and being honored. This must have seemed strange back in the day... How could his life be taken away and yet live as the scripture says?

Now let me tell you a little not so secret detail here. Isaiah wrote this approximately 700 years before Christ was born.

Now the skeptics have come up with a number of fairy tales to explain the death and resurrection of Christ despite the many references to in in external historical documents. Yet let's see what the great thinkers have come up with shall we?

1. All 514+ people who saw Jesus were hallucinating during the 11 different times he appeared to people following his death and resurrection. The reports were all corroborated and the people relating the information were so certain that they were willing to die for it.
2. Somebody stole the body of Jesus... Hmm, the tomb was sealed; People would be put to death for breaking the seal of the tomb. Since 514+ people said they saw him, they would all have to be in on it. And the tomb was guarded.
3. There is the concept that Jesus although on the cross all that time, pierced through the side, given nothing but vinegar to drink didn't really die. Personally, I think the romans were pretty good at determining when their victims were dead, but maybe that's just me. They postulate that the coolness of the tomb revived him.
4. Paul's final proof is that he saw it with his own eyes. In verse 8 we read:
"Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him."

Today, If you have been wondering if there is really a God, If there is really a savior who died and rose again, if you have wondered what comes next, Jesus has the answers for you.

He has given his life as a sacrifice for each person here individually, he did this because he loved you and obeyed the Father in bringing us back into right relationship.

Today Jesus asks one thing... He asks that his children believe in him. Here is the good news!

John 3:16-18 NKJV

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

As we bow our heads this morning if you feel that you need to make a commitment to Jesus, you can come to the front for prayer or simply stay where you are. If you want to commit to Jesus simply repeat after me quietly where you are or come on up here and we will pray with you.

Prayer:

Jesus, I have made many mistakes in my life. I have sinned. I ask that you forgive me and come into my heart and wash away all my sin. I am resolved that you are my savior and I will believe in you all the days of my life, so that I may life forever with you in eternity.

Today, I also address the church... If you feel that your commitment to Jesus has waxed cold or you just need a fresh touch from the Lord, you are welcome to come here for prayer or simply pray where you are. Let the prayers be from your heart. Simply ask the Holy Spirit to renew and increase your faith and believe.

AMEN.