

THE LINKS BETWEEN JESUS' RESURRECTION AND OTHER DOCTRINES OF OUR FAITH

There are important links between Jesus' resurrection and baptism, and between Jesus' resurrection and the new lives that Christians should be living. It is important to see links between His resurrection and other doctrines of our faith.

Jesus resurrection is linked to our conversion. We have faith because of the same mighty power of God working in our hearts as the Father worked in the dead Jesus when He raised Him to life.

Ephesians 1: 18-19 ... that you may know... what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us, who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul wrote that if Christ has not been raised, one of the four things that would be useless is our faith: To be sure, if the dead are not raised, Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith cannot help you; you are still in your sins (v. 16-17).

The central doctrine of the Scriptures, justification through faith, or the forgiveness of sins, is terrible deception if Christ did not rise. In the passage just quoted, Paul wrote, "You are still in your sins." He also wrote, positively, that God is the God who has brought things that did not exist into existence, and brings life from what is as good as dead. Not only did He give Abraham and Sarah a son long after the time for Sarah to have a child. Paul also wrote: "Already, then, God also had in mind to credit it [our faith] to us who believe in Him who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead. It was He who was handed over to death because of our failures and then was raised because of our justification (R 4:24-25).

That is the reason why Paul says in I Corinthians 15: 14 that if Christ has not been raised, the preaching of the apostles was useless. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching means nothing and your faith means nothing.

Indeed, if Christ had not been raised, the apostles were charlatans. One of their chief functions was to testify that they had seen Jesus after His resurrection. The election of Matthias to replace Judas also makes that very clear (Acts 1:20-22). Paul wrote: "We also stand there as men who lied about God because we have sworn by God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if it is true that the dead are not raised" (1 Corinthians 15:15).

Not only was the truthfulness of the apostles of the New Testament at stake, but the truthfulness of the Old Testament was also vindicated by Jesus' resurrection. Jesus predicted that He would rise, like Jonah, who came back from the great fish after three days. Jesus told the two disciples going to Emmaus:

"O fools, and slow of heart to believe everything the prophets have said! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and enter into His glory?"

Shortly before His ascension Jesus told His disciples: "These are the very words I spoke to you while I was still with you, namely, that everything written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: 'The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day'" (L 24:44-46).

Paul said that the Gospel handed on to him had, as its chief content: "...that Christ died for our sins as the Scriptures said He would, that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day as the Scriptures said He would" (1 C 15:3-4).

Only one who was fully God could lay down His life and take it up again Himself. Jesus said: "The Father loves Me because I give up My life in order to take it back again. No one takes it from Me. No, of My own free will I am giving it up. I have the authority to give it up, and I have the authority to take it back again. This is what My Father has ordered Me to do" (J 10:17-18).

Jesus' very nature as God was declared through His resurrection. The Gospel is about: "God's Son, who, according to His human nature was born a descendant of David, but who, according to His holy divinity, was declared with power by His resurrection from the dead to be the Son of God. He is our Lord Jesus Christ"(R 1:3-4).

The chief point that Paul grappled with the 1 Cor. 15 was the belief that some Christians at Corinth had, in common with many Greeks, that the body was a prison-house for the soul. They believed that the life to come would not include the human body. Paul shows the direct connection between Jesus' resurrection and the resurrection of the bodies of believers at the last day to eternal life: "If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christ has not been raised. If Christ is our hope in this life only, we are to be pitied more than all other people. But now

Christ has been raised from the dead, the first in the harvest of those who have fallen asleep. For since a man brought death, a Man also brought the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each one in his own turn: Christ the Firstfruits; then, when He comes, those who belong to Christ.” (1 C 15:13,19-23) Jesus said, “Because I live, you also will live” (J 14:19).

Christ’s resurrection is very important for the comfort of Christians when they are bereaved. Paul adds, that, if Christ has not been raised, “Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished (1 C 15:19). When Martha was grieving over her brother Lazarus, Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The person who believes in Me will live even if he dies. Yes, everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. (J 11:25-26).

That is why Paul assured that Thessalonians that Christians do not grieve over their dead as those who have no hope (1 Thess 4:13).

Not only does Christ’s resurrection have an important connection with baptism, but also with what we receive in the Lord’s Supper. Though Jesus has told us to remember His death in the Supper, it is not the body of a corpse that we receive, but that of our living and life-giving Lord. Though Jesus expected to die shortly after instituting His Supper, He told the disciples to celebrate it often until His coming (1 C 11:26). The Aramaic word “*Maranatha*”, meaning, “Our Lord, come” (1 C 16:22) was in the liturgy of Christians in the early Church for their Lord’s Supper.

Jesus’ resurrection means that He is alive now, the closest friend and helper that each of us has. His resurrection assures us that He will indeed come again to take us to Himself.