

EASTER EXAMINED

THE RESURRECTION

Jen Goffin

The resurrection is the story of the worst thing that has ever happened becoming the greatest thing that has ever happened. Jesus' crucifixion and all the surrounding events were important steps in the fulfilment of scripture and to do the work of atonement that is needed for us to be reconciled with God.

When we refer to the resurrection we mean the bodily resurrection of Jesus, who definitely died, but three days later was raised back to life again by the power of God, and who then appeared physically to the disciples before ascending back into heaven.

The resurrection is of utmost importance to our Christian faith, if there was no resurrection then we have no faith and everything we believe is pointless.

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, you are still in your sins. (1 Corinthians 15:17, NIV)

The resurrection was important to the early church and a central part of their faith.

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. (1 Corinthians 15:3-8, NIV)

Evidence - Early documentation of the belief in the resurrection means it wasn't invented 200 years later.

The basis of our faith is an actual historical event for which there is actual evidence.

The Events Of The Resurrection

- The priests went to Pilate and requested the tomb is sealed and guarded.
 - They remembered what Jesus said about rising from the dead and actively put plans in place to prevent it. (Matthew 27:62-66)
 - Later on after the body was gone the Priests colluded with the guards and bribed them to spread the story that the disciples had stolen the body. (Matthew 28:11-15)

Evidence - The tomb was empty. If there was a body the priests would have only had to produce it to prove the contrary.

- Early on the Sunday morning the women went to the tomb. (Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-10, John 20:1-2)

Evidence - The testimony of women was not considered reliable in that culture. An invented story would be less likely to be believed.

- They found the stone rolled away.
- Angels appeared and told them that Jesus is risen (Hallelujah!).
- They went to tell the disciples who at first did not believe them.
- But then Peter and John visited the tomb as well and found it empty. (Luke 24:12, John 20:3-20)
- Over the next 40 days Jesus appeared in many places to many different groups of people.

- Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9-11, John 20:10-18), the other women at the tomb (Matthew 28:8-10), Peter in Jerusalem (Luke 24:34, 1 Corinthians 15:5), two travellers on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-34), ten disciples behind closed doors (Mark 16:14, Luke 24:36-43, John 20:19-25), all the disciples with Thomas (John 20:26-31, 1 Corinthians 15:5), seven disciples whilst fishing (John 21:1-14), eleven disciples on the mountain (Matthew 28:16-20), a crowd of 500 (1 Corinthians 15:6), Jesus' brother James (1 Corinthians 15:7), those who watched Jesus ascend to heaven (Luke 24:44-49, Acts 1:3-8).
- Jesus then ascended into heaven, watched by his disciples and others (Mark 16:19, Luke 24:50-53, Acts 1:9-11).

Encounters With Jesus

Meeting with Mary. (John 20:11-18)

- Mary didn't recognise Jesus until he called her by name - she responded to his personal call.
- Because of the resurrection we can have a personal relationship with Jesus.

Meeting with Thomas. (John 20:24-29)

- He didn't accept his friends testimony and wanted specific proofs that Jesus was alive, he wanted hard physical evidence - similar to many sceptics in the world today.
- Once Thomas was presented with the evidence he had requested he readily accepted it, he had a revelation of who Jesus is and he truly recognised him.
- Because of the resurrection we can have a deeper knowledge of who Jesus is and truly acknowledge him as our exalted King.

Meeting with Peter (John 21:15-19)

- Jesus asks Peter three times 'Do you love me' and asks him to serve others - 'feed my sheep'
- Because of the resurrection we are reconciled with God and called to his service.

Evidence - the disciples gave their lives for the truth of Jesus' resurrection. People will die for things they only believe to be true. People don't die for things they know to be lies.

What Does This Mean For Us?

1 Peter 1:3-9

We can be assured of our own regeneration. (Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:4-6)

We can be assured of our justification. (Philippians 2:8-11)

We can be assured of our own resurrection and restoration. (1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17)

Because of the resurrection our lives have eternal significance. The work that we do here on earth is not futile and we have an eternity with God waiting for us.

Colossians 3:1-4, 1 Corinthians 15:54-58

Resources:

- The Resurrection Of The Son Of God by N. T. Wright
- Cold Case Christianity by J. Warner Wallace
- The Case For Christ by Lee Strobel
- Hope In Times Of Fear by Timothy Keller
- Who Moved The Stone by Frank Morison