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The Resurrection

"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!" Luke 24:5-6

Key verses: Luke 23:44-24:12; John 20

Key personalities: Jesus, and the Disciples.

Timeline: The God of Eternity; He enters as a Man, being fully God and fully Man, walks this earth as our Lead, 28-29 A.D.

Friday's death has passed and Sunday has come! The climax of Jesus' ministry and work has reached culmination--He is Risen! We mark this particular day on Easter Sunday; but, we celebrate the Risen, Conquering Christ daily. The history of humanity, our separation of God by sin, the move of our Lord through history and our lives has interwoven to the finishing point--by His obedience on the cross and in His Resurrection, we have redemption. He lived on our behalf. He has died in our place to absorb God's wrath and pay our debt of sin; now, He rises to life, conquers death, and gives us victory and grace for a life of fulfillment and fullness (Psalm 16:11; 107:09; Isa. 26:3; John 14:21; Gal. 5:16; 22-23; 1 John 1:7-9; 3 John 4)!

Key Happenings: Christ's Sacrifice for All

The Resurrection is the ultimate wonder of the universe--the incredibly impossible and the incredibly triumphant love of God. Jesus was crucified. He died, was buried, and now He is back to life, arisen! This is fulfilled prophecy, and He gives us not only salvation for a future Kingdom, but also hope for today. By God's mercy and Jesus' great love, we have real faith that fulfills our empty, meaningless lives with a real purpose (Psalm 16:8-10; Matt. 12:40; 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; Acts 17:30-31; Rom. 4:21; 1 Cor. 15:16-17, 51-58; 1 Peter 1:3).

The Resurrection is the heart of Christianity, the ultimate climax that has come for the Church and for the Christian!

Jesus has risen from death! This gives us our eternal life, hope for the future, and effectual life for today. It encompasses all of our Lord's life and mission and the incredible, undeserved miracle of our redemption! All that God has made has pointed to His Son, who lived and died for you and for me so that we may live eternally with God in Heaven. Jesus, being both God and sinless man, knew our sin and God's great wrath. This sin grieves the Father; the Son has died in our place to absorb God's wrath and pay our debt of sin; the Resurrection is Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord and Savior conquering death and giving us new life by His victory and the product of grace for a life of fulfillment and fullness!

The Resurrection is the celebration of the accomplished Gospel!

The Gospel is the ultimate Message, the ultimate Good News that is wrapped up in this happening, the wonder of the universe! This is the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and this means that Jesus was crucified; He died, and was buried and He rises, conquering death to give us life (Psalm 16:11; 107:09; Isa. 26:3; John 14:21; Gal. 5:16; 22-23; 1 John 1:7-9; 3 John 4).

Early on a Sunday morning nearly two thousand years ago, Jesus defied the laws of science, nature, and reason, moving from being completely dead to being completely regenerated and resurrected, proving He is, indeed, LORD over life and death and offering us hope for today and everlasting life for tomorrow. Mary Magdalene was the first to witness this; at first, she did not understand what was going on. She found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty, so she ran to tell Peter and John. She exclaimed *they have taken the Lord's body; I do not know where He is!* Peter and John ran to see. John went to the threshold and saw for himself, and then they both went in and saw that the burial linens were left but Christ was gone. Impossible, perplexing, and yet observing that the linens were neatly folded, the realization came that the Scriptures were being fulfilled!

Tomb/grave. After death, the bodies were either buried in the ground or interred in an antechamber in a cave outside of the city or town limits, fulfilling both Jewish burial laws and Roman law. A tomb had several "loculi," burial chambers or benches cut into the limestone walls that could hold many decomposing bodies, with smaller "arcosolia" niches, or both that could be used, and many more small burial boxes called *Ossuaries*. Most burial sites were owned by clans and rich families. A year later, after the bodies had decomposed, they were dug up, placed in a family crypt, and positioned into a slot in the wall like a modern safety deposit box. This process could take one to two years. This was done due to land space and expense. The *Ossuary* would be placed on a shelf in the tomb. This is still practiced in many parts of the Middle East today. The location of the tomb was in a garden near where Christ was crucified (Isaiah 53:9; Matt. 27: 60; Luke 23:53; John 11:38-57; 19:41).

- *The stone.* The tombs of the wealthy had large, circular stones, about four to five feet in diameter, cut into the cave face with an upward slant. It would take several strong soldiers to move it. Matthew adds the "tomb be made secure," giving testament to the validity of Jesus' resurrection as the government and the religious leaders had a vested interest to keep Jesus buried! Pilate allowed Roman guards to secure the tomb, leaving no possibility for someone to intervene and steal the body (Matt. 28:11, 14).
- Anyone tampering with the seal would invoke the death penalty for it. No one would have been that foolish; and, even if they were, the wax of the seal could not have been recreated and thus, the resurrection would have proven to be a fraud. If anyone tampered with the tomb, the religious leaders would have used this to put down the new Christian group once and for all.
- Classic liberal and critical scholarly rebuttals offered justifications that perhaps the Disciples had gone to the wrong tomb, the body was stolen, or Jesus was really not dead (the "swoon theory" meaning *passed out*), all attempts to avoid the real Truth. If any of these were so, people could easily check the correct tomb or have found Jesus body or that He was still alive. If it were just a hallucination, how did it affect so many people for such a long time? Again, the facts can be checked; this indeed did happen (Matt. 27: 57-60; Mark 15:46; Luke 24:2)!
- Then, while Mary was outside of the tomb, two angels asked her why she was crying. All she could think of was to ask where Jesus' body was. She did not recognize the veracity of the situation because she was consumed with grief and uncertainty. At this time, as Jesus made His first resurrected appearance, she still did not recognize Him or understand what was going on. Jesus asked her why she was crying and for whom she looked. Thinking this was a gardener, blinded by anguish, skepticism, and tears and probably not even looking at Him, all Jesus needed to do was call her by name. Mary may not have even looked at him, due to grief and tears and sand, and merely assumed; or else, she knew the gardener was there or saw him and made an assumption, as she did not look at Him until Jesus called her by name *Mary!* He then asked her to go and tell the others, and so she did: *I have seen the risen Lord* (Luke 24:16-31)!

Jesus defied the laws of science, nature, and reason, moving from being completely dead to being completely regenerated and resurrected, proving He is indeed LORD over life and death and offering us hope for today and everlasting life for tomorrow.

The Resurrection becomes the motivation, allowing us to be giving great joy and gratitude through our commitment to God and the courage to witness.

This joy means our faith and fruit will overflow from us to others around us! This joy grows in us as we mature in the faith and as we are filled with His Word. This joy is the power to enjoy Him in worship and in lifestyle for His service and glory that affects all aspects of our lives, as well as the lives of those who surround us. Because of Christ, His Word will bring us joy (Ruth 3:2-7; Isa. 9:3; Neh. 8:10; Eccl. 2:18; Matt. 24:21-22, 30; Luke 15:7-10, 32; 17:30; John 14:16-26; 16:12-15; 17:17; Acts 28:16-30; Rom. 13:11-14; 1 Cor. 7:29; 2 Cor. 2:15-16; 4:7-12; Eph. 1:13-14; 6:16; 4:30; Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 3:15-16; James 1:2; 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

Why is the Resurrection so Important? If Jesus is just a dead man, just someone who was a great teacher who lived and then died two thousand years ago, then what is the Church and this Christianity all about?

Without a Resurrection, we have no proof of life and the Lordship of Jesus; our faith, preaching and life is all in vain! Church and Christianity is meaningless (as is anything to do with faith) and becomes worthless. When life is over, it is over; from dust we came, to dust we go, and life itself is vain and meaningless. However, because Jesus is as He says--the risen LORD Christ--we not only have life for eternity, we have a life of worth we can live now, too!

The After Glow of the Resurrection. After Jesus arose from death, He went into a *show-and-tell* mode! He presented proof of who He is and what He came to do; He told His followers to go and tell the Good News to others. But, the Disciples were afraid of the Jewish leaders who had ordered Jesus' death and who now were out for them. They hid in a locked room so no one could get at them as they considered what they would do next. Suddenly, Jesus stood before them. He showed them His wounds to prove He was fully alive and not a ghost. The room was filled with an abundance of great joy: *The Lord is here! He is risen indeed! Halleluiah!*

- Why did Thomas doubt? What was seen could not be fully comprehended by many, so *some doubted*. The magnitude of Jesus' resurrection was beyond mere comprehension; without seeing it for themselves, as Thomas asked for and received, many refused to believe. Others truly believed by faith and worshipped Him. For us, although we do not have Jesus physically showing us His hands and feet, we do have the Holy Spirit that reveals the truth to us. Jesus said, *blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*.
- Jesus did not fit the expectations of the people, the religious leaders, or the disciples. A total change in worldview had to occur before He could be accepted fully. Keep in mind Jesus spent three years preparing his Disciples for the event. We have to be careful that we do not jump to conclusions with little more information than our feelings and a "sound byte." Know this: our opponents will see our hypocrisy and lack of Fruit and faith (real or not), and they will recognize over-compensation for a misguided theology out of the rubble of our pride or lack of explanation (John 20:26-29; Phil. 3:1-14).

What does the Resurrection mean? It means life! It means Hope! It proves His case, teachings and claims that our Lord is who He is all true. He IS the God who is here, who lovingly condescends to us, communicates His love and plan as LORD, Savior, Judge, God, Creator, Redeemer, who proves to be our rest for our hope, faith, trust, service and obedience. He solves our most major problem--sin--and appeases God's just wrath for our sin that our judgment is justified and grace is undeserving on our part. He gives us our eternal life and real life for today. He gives us personal and collective power, hope for living, and purpose for life here and now (John 5:22-29; 6:40; Acts 16:31; 17:31; Rom. 1:4; 4:25; 10:9; 1 Cor. 15:14-23, 45; 2 Cor. 4:14; Eph. 1:19-21; 1 Thess. 4:14).

The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ was the supreme act of proving who He is and what He can do for us! It was the raising to life of a man who was dead and buried, a man who was fully human and fully God (Acts 1:3). The fact that so many people saw Him after His resurrection and the impact of the fatal wounds He received was the proof text for many to come to faith and devote themselves to Christianity over the centuries. Christ paved the way for us to live in eternity and conquer the fatality of death (Luke 24:31; 36; Acts 2:24; 17:31; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11,20; 50-57; Philippians 3:21; Hebrews 7:16-24).

Do you realize the magnitude and wonder, the incredible gift beyond measure that we have with our Lord's work and sacrifice?

Our Response to the Resurrection. The question to us and all of humanity is *do you believe this?* We have the great comfort that the God of the universe, our Creator and Lord, knows us, loves us, and will be with us! So, what do you say? *Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. Jesus has defeated the powers of death. Jesus turns our sorrow into dancing. Jesus has the words of eternal life -Alleluia!* So say we all!

Key Takeaway: Without the resurrection, we would not have Christianity--no saving faith. We would have no salvation, no connection to God, no remission of sins, no purpose for life, no hope, no reason for living, and no reason to do evangelism, discipleship, or missions or any other kind of ministry as it would all be futile and meaningless. Without the resurrection, we would have no reason to meet for worship or have a Church, as we would have no message or meaning or ministry; all we would have is futile, a life of emptiness, vanity, and

senselessness. We would just be a club and have some great rules and precepts to live by! With the resurrection; we are transformed, and saved for eternity in relationship with God--not just for here and now (John 10:4; 16:10; 2 Cor. 5:20). We are not called to save souls. That is the role of the Holy Spirit. Rather, we are called to help the "soul bearers" to learn and grow (Rom. 4:25; 14:8; 1 Cor. 15:1-19; 2 Cor. 5:20-21; Phil 1:23; 2:6-11; 3:10-14)!

The Call to the Church? Do you understand the importance, relevance, and impact of the Cross? Do the people in your care? The cross on display is the symbol of torture and punishment turned into an enduring icon of redemption and love! The cross is pivotal for the real Christian faith. Without it, there would have been no redemption or real faith, as the substance of our faith would have been absent. The cross is central to who Jesus is and what He did for us. It must be displayed, and preached and taught. If you take away the cross, you no longer have a faith; you have a mere religion based on superstitions and man's creative ingenuity. The cross represents atonement--our being forgiven of our debt of sin by our Lord's shed blood. This is the heart and core of our faith. There is no Christianity without the cross! Jesus carried the sins of those religious leaders, the sins of those soldiers, and our sins to the cross. Such an enormous, incredible gift of grace! If only we will accept it by faith! If only we would be willing to pursue that faith into the depths of His Word and precepts in order to be better in our character, in our maturity, and in our witness (Psalm 22; Matt. 32-37)!

Questions to Ponder

1. When you are excited about something, who do you like to tell?
2. What prevents you from "wrapping your mind around" events that are hard to understand or believe?
3. Why do you think Mary or Thomas did not recognize the situation? What causes you not to recognize pivotal situations?
4. What do you do when you are consumed with grief or doubt? How do your assumptions get in the way of His call and plan for you?
5. What can you do with the fact that in Christ, you have hope for today and everlasting life for eternity?
6. How do you feel that as Christians, we are the agents and representatives of God? Why do so many of us fail at this?
7. What does a life filled with joy and praise for Christ look like? What can you do to look to His guidance from His Word and Holy Spirit, and walk in Him?
8. What can you do to live for Christ? What would that mean and look like? Now how will you live your life?
9. How does the fact that our Lord and Savior died in your place affect you? As you walk with Him? Your relationships? Your ministry? Your work? Or?
10. How does the fact that grace is offered to you affect your daily thoughts and attitudes? How about how you deal with and treat others?
11. What does your faith in Christ mean to you? Now that you have salvation by the work He did on the cross, you can _____?
12. How can you communicate what Jesus did for you? What can your church do to more fully understand the depth of His sacrifice on your behalf?