

The Ten Basic Steps: Introduction - The Uniqueness of Jesus

Lesson 4: The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Jesus' crucifixion demoralized His followers. The terror stricken little band scattered; Jesus' enemies were celebrating their victory. But three days after the crucifixion a miracle occurred: Jesus rose from the dead.

Within a few weeks His once cowardly followers were fearlessly proclaiming His resurrection, a fact that changed the course of history. Followers of Jesus Christ were not people who promoted an ethical code of a dead founder, rather, those who had vital contact with a living Lord. Jesus Christ still lives today, and He is anxiously waiting to work in the lives of those who will trust Him.

The new life and fresh courage demonstrated by the early Christians is vividly described by J.B. Phillips in the Preface to his Letters to Young Churches:

The great difference between present-day Christianity and that of which we read in these letters is that to us it is primarily a performance; to them it was a real experience. We are apt to reduce the Christian religion to a code, or at best a rule of heart and life. To these men it is quite plainly the invasion of their lives by a new quality of life altogether. They do not hesitate to describe this as Christ "living in" them.

Mere moral reformation will hardly explain the transformation and the exuberant vitality of these men's lives -- even if we could prove a motive for such reformation, and certainly the world around offered little encouragement to the early Christians! We are practically driven to accept their own explanation, which is that their little human lives had, through Christ, been linked up with the very life of God.

Many Christians today talk about the "difficulties of our times" as though we should have to wait for better ones before the Christian religion can take root. It is heartening to remember that this faith took root and flourished amazingly in conditions that would have killed anything less vital in a matter of weeks.

These early Christians were on fire with the conviction that they had become, through Christ, literal sons of God; they were pioneers of a new humanity, founders of a new kingdom.

They still speak to us across the centuries. Perhaps if we believed what they believed, we might achieve what they achieved.

Five Proofs that Jesus actually rose from the dead.

1. The resurrection was foretold by Jesus Christ, the Son of God. What did Jesus tell His disciples in Luke 18:31-33?

If Jesus had clearly predicted that He would rise from the dead, then failed to do so, what would this say about Him?

2. The resurrection of Christ is the only reasonable explanation for the empty tomb. What did Jesus' friends do to make certain His body would not be taken? (Mark 15:46)

What did Jesus' enemies do to make sure His body would not be taken? (Matthew 27:62-66)

But on Sunday morning the tomb was empty!

Note: If Jesus had not been killed, but only weakened and wounded by crucifixion, the stone and the soldiers would have prevented His escape from the tomb. If Jesus' friends had tried to steal His body, the stone and the soldiers would likewise have prevented them. Jesus' enemies would never have taken the body since its absence from the tomb would only serve to encourage belief in His resurrection. *Only His resurrection can account for the empty tomb!*

3. The resurrection is the only reasonable explanation for the appearance of Jesus Christ to His disciples. List all the individuals or groups who actually saw the risen Christ, according to I Corinthians 15:4-8.

If Christ has not risen from the dead, what could we then conclude about all these witnesses? (I Corinthians 15:15)

What else would be true if Christ had not risen from the dead? (I Corinthians 15:17)

When Christ appeared to His followers, what things did He do to prove He was not a hallucination? (Luke 24:36-43)

4. The dramatic changes in the lives of His followers. Look up these verses and describe the differences in these people:
Peter (Luke 22:54-62; Acts 4:1-22)
Thomas (John 20:24-28, Acts 1:12-14)
Paul (Acts 7:54-8:3, Acts 16:16-40)

5. The resurrection is the only reasonable explanation for the beginning of the Christian church. Within a few weeks after Jesus' resurrection, Peter preached at Pentecost, and the Christian church began.

What was the subject of his sermon? (Acts 2:14-36)

If the body of Jesus were still in the tomb, how do you think Peter's audience would have responded to this sermon? But how did they respond? (Acts 2:37-42)

The Results of the Resurrection.

1. What does the resurrection tell us about the following:

Jesus Christ (Romans 1:4)

The power God can exercise in our lives. (Ephesians 1:19-20)

What will eventually happen to our bodies. (Philippians 3:21)

2. How would your life be affected if Christ had not risen from the dead? (I Corinthians 15:12-26)
3. If we can believe the resurrection, why is it then logical to believe all the miracles Jesus performed?

The visible return of Christ.

1. Describe the way in which Christ will return to Earth. (Matthew 24:30, Acts 1:11)
2. How does this compare to the first time Christ came to Earth?
3. What will happen to the Christian when Christ comes for him? (I Corinthians 15:51-52, Philippians 3:20-21)
4. What will be the condition of the Earth when Christ returns? (Matthew 24:6-8)
5. What will happen to those who are not Christians when He returns? (II Thessalonians 1:7-9)

6. What is our present hope? (I John 2:2-3)

Life Application

Hebrews 13:8 says Jesus is the same today, and He can transform your life.

1. How would your life be different from what it is if Jesus had not risen from the dead?
2. How do you think His "resurrection life" can be seen in you on a daily basis?
3. How can your life be different if you allow Jesus to transform it?

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