

## Resurrection Sunday 2009 If Christ is Not Risen.....

1). It may seem from our standpoint within this dispensation utterly ridiculous to question the resurrection from the dead – after all it is in the resurrection of those who have died in Christ and the rapture of those that remain that our hope finds its context.

a). However, recorded in scripture, we find a group of Christians, a local church body, who had received sound foundational teaching from the Apostle Paul – the church at Corinth - 1Co 15:1 ¶ *Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you-- unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. 6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. 7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. 8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 11 Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.*

b). And what we see here is exactly what we would expect – ‘first of all’ Paul preached, *that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.*

c). Having received and believed the gospel of grace they then were presented with the gospel of the glories of Christ - *Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain.*

d). And yet despite the sound foundational teaching we find rising up within the group an errant idea - 1Co 15:12 ¶ *Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?*

e). The challenge for us in this is not in denying the literalness of the resurrection from the dead, that which we speak with our mouth, but whether our

actions or lack of action declares louder than words that we don't really believe that it is possible for us to have been raised from the dead to live in newness of life for whatever period of time remains for us in these earthly bodies now and that we really don't grasp what awaits us at the resurrection/rapture, then.

f). For there is a time coming, if the return of the Lord is not as soon as we would like, when we will have to put off this body of flesh as we experience physical death. At that point there is no more time available to us. There will be nothing more we can do. No more opportunity to die to self. No more repentance. No more fruit production. Our race will be over. The only opportunity we have to get it right is now, while it is still called today.

g). Exactly what the mechanics of physical death would look like, beyond our spirit being with the Lord, our soul in the place of the dead and our body in the ground, it is impossible to say. But what we can say with certainty is that beyond physical death judgment awaits at the Judgment Seat for all those in Christ and this should really cause our focus to sharpen - Joh 5:28 *"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 "and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.*

h). To say that there is no resurrection from the dead would really be the same as asking the question, 'Where is the promise of His coming?' – Both could be classified as the doctrine of demons – placing all our attention on the present world and our present circumstances rather than on the world to come.

2). Our scripture continues - 1Co 15:13 *But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. 14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. 15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up--if in fact the dead do not rise. 16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! 18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.*

a). If Christ is not risen then everything that has been preached to you over the last four years is a lie – as a result my preaching and our faith is both empty and futile.

b). Our faith would be empty and futile because our faith is in the hope that is set before us – a hope that is absolutely dependent on the resurrection of Christ.

c). Heb 11:1 ¶ *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

d). 1Pe 1:3 ¶ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through*

*the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

e). And here we have it clearly – we have been born again to a ‘living hope’ – a hope that is alive as it is the person of Jesus Christ through His resurrection from the dead.

f). And so, if Christ is not risen there is no living hope and therefore, there is no 7<sup>th</sup> Day, there is no inheritance. In fact if Christ is not risen then Jesus was not the Christ at all.

g). And if Jesus is not the Christ, then His death and shed blood did not take away our sin, and nor do we have a High Priest in the heavens to whom we may boldly go in time of need and we remain at the mercy of our old man.

h). We may thank God that this is not the case.

3). As we will know scripture records a number of occasions when people have been raised from the dead and details of their resurrection are readily supplied to us.

a). Let’s first look at an incident concerning Elijah - 1Ki 17:17 ¶ *Now it happened after these things that the son of the woman who owned the house became sick. And his sickness was so serious that there was no breath left in him. 18 So she said to Elijah, "What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?" 19 And he said to her, "Give me your son." So he took him out of her arms and carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. 20 Then he cried out to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?" 21 And he stretched himself out on the child three times, and cried out to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, I pray, let this child's soul come back to him." 22 Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived. 23 And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house, and gave him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, your son lives!"*

b). So we can note the details here – the child dies, Elijah intercedes on the child’s behalf with God, God returns life to the lifeless body, the boy is then taken by Elijah from the place where he was lying and given back to his mother.

c). What we see here with the widow’s son is very similar to what we find with an incident concerning Peter in - Ac 9:36 ¶ *At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. 37 But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper*

room. 38 And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. 39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. 40 But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. 41 Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

d). As we look at this we see the same sequence of events – Dorcas dies, Peter intercedes for her with God, God returns life to the lifeless body, Dorcas is then taken by Peter from the place where she was lying and given back to the saints and widows.

e). And again with respect to Jesus and the raising of Lazarus – Joh 11:39 *Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days." 40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" 41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 42 "And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me." 43 Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" 44 And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."*

f). Lazarus dies, Jesus intercedes for him, life returns to the lifeless body and Lazarus, still 'bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face wrapped with a cloth' emerges from his tomb to be united with Martha and Mary.

g). These three examples of resurrection are strikingly similar in their details and all have three other significant features in common. Although the widow's son, Dorcas and Lazarus were all resurrected from the dead they were resurrected in the same body of flesh, bone and blood that they previously had which means they all died again at a later point in time. And none of them were able to raise themselves from the dead.

4). Now if we keep these things in mind and then look at the details of the resurrection of Christ we will see a striking difference, a difference that is Divinely orchestrated to demonstrate the infallibility of its proof.

a). Let's start with the detail of Christ's burial - Joh 19:38 ¶ *After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews,*

*asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. 39 And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. 40 Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. 41 Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. 42 So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.*

b). The detail we need to note here is the mixture of myrrh and aloes that weighed about a hundred pounds that was spread upon the body of Jesus that was then wrapped with strips of linen.

c). I am sure the picture is obvious – Christ's body was encased with the spices and the strips of linen and would have resembled after some fashion an Egyptian mummy.

d). Now it would be impossible to say how long it would have taken for the spices to become hardened, but given the arid conditions even within a short period of time there would have been some degree of solidifying.

e). So keeping this picture in our mind let's now move to the first day of the week following the Lord's crucifixion - Joh 20:1 ¶ *Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 2 Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." 3 Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. 4 So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. 5 And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed.*

f). What was it that Peter and John saw in that tomb that caused them to believe that Christ was raised from the dead? In essence, the empty shell of spices and linen strips that had held His body.

g). The linen strips had not been unwrapped, the hundred pounds of spices had not been scraped off, they were in exactly the same shape as the Lord's body, but His body was no longer there. And the napkin that had been around His head was not in the same place in order to reveal the empty shell.

h). Jesus hadn't, like the widow's son, Dorcas and Lazarus, come to life in the place He was laying, unlike Lazarus He didn't have to have the stone removed

to let Him out or need help with His grave clothes. And there was no third party intercession on His behalf – Jesus raised Himself from the dead - Joh 11:25 *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life*

- in conjunction with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Please get the picture really clearly – Jesus didn't 'wake up' to find someone praying for Him who would then help Him walk out of the tomb – no, in the minutest particle of time, in the twinkling of an eye, His body, soul and spirit were instantly reunited at a location outside of the tomb. One moment His body was there the next it wasn't. It is that simple.

i). And as for the stone in front of the tomb – that had been taken away to let the disciples in, not to let Jesus out.

j). So how can we know it happened this way? Because of the events later that day - Joh 20:19 ¶ *Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."*

k). The doors were shut and yet Jesus stood in their midst. He didn't walk through the wall, He was just instantly there. An event that was repeated again some eight days later when Thomas was present.

l). And how is this possible? Because the risen Christ had the same body of flesh and bone as previously, but now the life giving force within Him was no longer the blood, as His blood was poured out for our sins, but the Holy Spirit. And a spirit animated body, as we see with Jesus, is neither bound by time nor space, nor was He to die a second time - Re 1:18 *"I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.*

m). Let's look at this from - 1Pe 3:18 ¶ *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh [His body of flesh, bone and blood] but made alive by the Spirit, [animated by the Spirit not the blood] 19 by whom also [in His Spirit animated body] He went and preached to the spirits in prison, 20 who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.*

n). Here we see Jesus appearing in Tartarus in His Spirit animated resurrected body to declare to the fallen angels who had cohabited with the daughters of men during the days of Noah that not only was the Seed of the woman now here, but had also proved Himself worthy, through His death and resurrection to redeem that which the first Adam had forfeited.

o). And in order to do this Jesus didn't have to make the journey to the center of the earth – He was just there.

5). Then if we continue with our scripture in Peter - 1Pe 3:21 ¶ *There is also an antitype which now saves us--baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.*

a). Note what we see here – the antitype of the flood of Noah, baptism, is what saves us. Now we know that we are not talking about eternal salvation, nor are we talking about a literal immersion in water, but rather the process that brings about the salvation of our soul through keeping our old man in the place of death. Dying to the flesh, pictured in baptism, will give us ‘the answer of a good conscience toward God’ when we stand at the Judgment Seat. And according to our scripture this is only made possible ‘through the resurrection of Jesus Christ’.

b). Ro 6:4 *Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

c). Now here is an important key for us – if Christ is not risen then we cannot keep our old man in the place of death, because this is an action that can only be done in the spirit.

d). Remember what Jesus said - Joh 16:7 ¶ *"Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. 8 "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 "of sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 "of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; 11 "of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. 12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. 15 "All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.*

e). And if Christ is not risen He could not send the Holy Spirit.

f). But here is great encouragement for us – we are witnesses of the fact that the Holy Spirit is here and dwells within us to guide us into all truth. He has taken what is Christ’s and declared it to us. And in this we can testify to the veracity of God’s word. We can with boldness and absolute certainty shout from the rooftops – Christ is risen from the dead.

g). 1Co 15:20 ¶ *But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*

6). Can we rejoice today in the absolute certainty of this? Can we rejoice in what Christ's resurrection has made possible for us? Can we rejoice in the power of His resurrection?

a). If all of this is reality, which it is, then how is it possible for so many Christians to be continually defeated and how is it possible even for those in pursuit of the Kingdom to be overcome by the world, the flesh and the devil?

b). The answer is very simple – we want the reward but we don't want to go through the process - 1Pe 2:21 *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:*

c). Most often you will find Christians blaming their circumstances or blaming others for their inability to be faithfully obedient, rather than taking the responsibility themselves, because they just don't want to.

d). In the present economic climate we would do well to remember that recorded in - Heb 11:35 *Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-- 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.*

e). For many Christians in the church at large the solution to their problems is to move on and stay somewhere else for a couple of years until the problems show up again, and then move on again rather than deal with them.

f). But hey, we are not like the church at large – where are we going to go?

g). If we deliberately choose to turn away from the issues in our life that we have to deal with it is not our issues that we turn our back on – it is the Kingdom.

h). Do not be deceived my beloved brethren.

i). Inevitably, as we have had this word working in our hearts for the last four years there will be a truck load of dirt that has to be washed off of us and sometimes the drain gets blocked. And when it does it's not the scent of roses that we find in our nostrils. Well the solution is not to stop washing, but to unblock the drain. We need to get out the spiritual liquid plumber of repentance and forgiveness and let the water keep washing over us.

j). The reality is that we are not responsible for what anyone else at anytime, anywhere, says about us or how they act towards us – but we are responsible for

how we respond to them. And our response is not based on self justification, but on faithful obedience to the word of God.

k). Let's go back to our 1 Peter scripture - 1Pe 2:21 *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

7). Church, Christ is risen from the dead – our faith is not empty and is not futile – it is the very essence of a resurrected life. Our hope is certain and irrevocable, and the prize still to be won. So if you are in a dark place today it is time to come up out of the grave and burst forth into His glorious light - Eph 5:14 *Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."*

a). For the 3<sup>rd</sup> Day is almost upon us when the dead in Christ will rise first and then those who remain to be caught up together with Him. Now is not the time to quit, to turn around, to give up – to fall asleep – now is the time to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God that He might exalt us in due time – now is the time to have the boldness and determination of Caleb and declare before the Lord – ‘Give me that mountain’.

b). Ro 6:5 *For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*

c). The Lord is risen, He is risen indeed – and because of this astounding reality we have the ability to choose to walk in the power of His resurrection every day of our life.