

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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The Centrality of the Resurrection

by Dan Trygg

“This is the message of faith that we proclaim: ⁹ if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”
Romans 10:8,9

“If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵ We are even misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ... ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.”
I Corinthians 15:14,15,17-24

The testimony of the NT is clear. Jesus died for our sins, once for all; *He rose again from the dead, and, after appearing physically to His disciples over a period of 40 days, He ascended to heaven.* This is not some “cleverly devised myth” (II Pet. 1:16), or a curiosity, or even a good story to be repeated as folklore to future generations. This is not just part of our cultural heritage. **What happened in 30 A.D. in Jerusalem are historical events, which are strongly verifiable**, using the *same* techniques and tests used to verify any other event in history.

The importance of those events cannot be overstated. The meaning of all human history hinges upon what took place there in those days. The *purpose* and *destiny* of the entire human race is tied to what happened in the garden tomb that Sunday morning, ...which happened to coincide with the Jewish Feast of Firstfruits that year. **Did Jesus rise from the dead, or not? If He didn't, then there is no basis for the Christian message.** It is all a sham. If He *did*, however, then we need to ask, “What is *meaning* of this event?” If we can believe the recorded teachings of Jesus, and the explanation of His disciples, who spoke with Him on numerous occasions after His resurrection, then **the resurrection is the event that establishes the claims of Christ to being the Messiah, ...and to being God having come in the flesh.** It also gives credibility to the testimony of the apostles regarding His miracles. After all, if *He* could rise from the dead, then that same power could, indeed, have operated *through* Him to heal others.

The basis for our *freedom from the penalty of sin* is the acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice by God, which **can only be definitively known if He was raised from the dead** (Rom. 4:22-25). The basis of *freedom from the power of sin, the flesh or the law* is that we were put to death with Jesus, and raised to newness of life together with Him, **...only a possibility if He rose from the dead** (Rom. 5-8). The *defeat of Satan can only be clearly demonstrated if Jesus overcame the power of death* by rising from the dead (Heb. 2:14,15; Col. 2:10-15). The *coming of the Holy Spirit*, who gives us new spiritual birth and empowers us to live a godly life, is **only because Jesus rose from the dead**, and sent Him (Acts 2:32,33). *The gospel hope* that we who trust in Him will also be raised from death, and transformed to be like Him, both in moral purity and in physical immortality, **...is only possible if He was raised** (I Jn. 3:2).

Jesus clearly stated that He would be coming back. He rose from the dead and *He will return.* **He is coming back to destroy the evil and corrupt power systems of this world, and establish His reign upon the earth.** He taught that not only will His people remain until the end (Matt. 24:34), but *He Himself is returning*, and *all* that He taught would be fulfilled. **The resurrection of Jesus is proof given by God that He has appointed Jesus to judge the world** (Acts 17:30,31). This is not some new spin concocted by Paul years after Jesus was gone. Paul is only faithfully *repeating what Jesus Himself said.* He claimed that “the Father will not judge anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, in order that all may honor the Son, *even as* they honor the Father” (Jn. 5:22,23). In Matt. 25, He described a scene which should get the attention of every person. *Jesus claimed* not only that He will return in glory, with the angels, to sit on the throne of His earthly kingdom, but *He said* that all nations will be gathered before *Him*, and *He* will judge them (vss. 31-46). Moreover, He has the authority to send people to their eternal destiny, of either punishment or life. **If this is true, it does not matter what we think of our life choices, what matters is what He thinks of our life choices.** We will be evaluated by *Him*, and *His* standards, ...not by our own conscience or by society's morals.

Obviously, if He did not rise from the dead, then He was mistaken. If He died, and *stayed* dead, then His understanding of Himself and His mission were erroneous. Then His teachings would have no special authority, ...for He would have been only a man, not God. Then, as Paul said, the Church through the ages has been promulgating nothing more than a myth. People would have perished for nothing more than a made-up story! **It all hinges upon the resurrection. Did Jesus rise from the dead? If so, what evidence do we have that supports that?**

Evidence For The Resurrection - If everything hinges upon this historical event, what indicates it really happened?

1.) **The Empty Tomb** – Without an empty tomb, there would be *no* claim of a resurrection. A resurrection meant that the corpse came to life. The four gospel accounts all agree that the tomb was empty on Sunday morning. To refute Christianity’s claims, all that would have been necessary was to show that Jesus’ tomb was still occupied.

2.) **The Graveclothes** – John’s account of Jesus’ burial and resurrection gives much detail and emphasis upon the graveclothes (19:38-42). Normally, the deceased would be buried or entombed within a few hours of death. We see from Lazarus’ burial, that he had also been wrapped and bound in linen strips (Jn. 11:44). One thing that was unusual in Jesus’ burial was the *quantity* of spices used in preparing the graveclothes. In preparing the body, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus used a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a 75 pounds in weight (100 - 12 oz.lbs). The spices were dried, but it was the practice to mix the spices with oil to a gummy consistency and spread this paste on the wrappings as you wrapped the body. 75 pounds would be a very large amount. This mixture not only served as an aromatic preservative, but also dried, like shellac, to cement the wrappings together. Normally the body was wrapped, mummy style, from the feet up to the neck, and a separate cloth was used to wrap the head and cover the face with a napkin. When Peter and John entered the tomb and saw the graveclothes still lying there, with the napkin still rolled up by itself, John said “he believed” (20:3-8). **What did they see? Not a pile of graveclothes removed from the body, but the body removed from the graveclothes!** The wrappings were still there in the shape of the body, but Jesus was no longer within its folds!

3.) **The Eye Witnesses** – Eyewitness evidence is stronger if it involves *multiple witnesses, in various settings and in various times*. Jesus’ appearances *cannot* be explained in terms of emotional manipulation or crowd hysteria, because of the wide variety of people and circumstances. Some witnesses were persuaded *against* all expectation. **Following is a listing of the eyewitness appearances of the risen Christ. Jesus appeared to: (a.) the women** returning from the angelic encounter at the tomb (Note, they went to anoint *His* body. They did *not* expect Him to be risen. There were at least four women – Lk. 24:10) – Matt. 28:1-9; **(b.) Mary Magdalene** at the tomb – Jn. 20:11-18; **(c.) Peter** – I Cor. 15:5; Lk. 24:34; **(d.) The two on the Emmaus Road** – Lk. 24:13-35; **(e.) The ten apostles on Sunday evening** – Jn. 20:19-24; **(f.) The eleven apostles a week later** – Jn. 20:24-29; **(g.) A group of 500 at one time** – I Cor. 15:6; **(h.) James, the brother of Jesus** – I Cor. 15:7; **(i.) Seven disciples at the Sea of Galilee** – Jn. 21:1-23; **(j.) The eleven on a mountain in Galilee** – Matt. 28:16-20; **(k.) The eleven on the Mount of Olives, near Bethany** – Lk. 24:50-53; Acts 1:1-13; **(l.) Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias** (The context indicates that they *must* have seen Jesus, because they were to be “witnesses of His resurrection”, and they had been among the disciples from the “baptism of John, until the day that He was taken up from us”) – Acts 1:21-26; **(m.) Saul of Tarsus** – I Cor. 15:8; Acts 9:1-19. **To sum up, we have at least 522 different people who had seen the risen Christ. The scriptures record at least 13 different appearances. In several of these instances, the state of mind of those who saw Him was not at all expecting Him to rise from the dead** (cf. a.,b.,c., d., e., i., and m. listed above) In fact, they were disheartened and grieving His death, which they thought was *final*. Jesus’ appearance to them caught them entirely off guard. The **wide variety of settings** (i.e., to individuals, to groups, in locked rooms, or outside in a variety of places) **preclude any possibility of crowd control or manipulation. As proof of the reality of His appearances, the witnesses testified that they (a.) held His feet** (Matt. 28:9); **(b.) clung to Him** (Jn. 20:17); **(c.) saw the wounds in His hands and side** (Jn. 20:20); **(d.) touched Him**, specifically *to be sure He was flesh and bone*, not an apparition (Lk. 24:39); **(e.) watched Him eat** fish in front of them (Lk. 24:41-43); **(f.) probed the wound holes** in His hands with a finger, and put a hand into the wound in His side (Jn. 20:24-29). **(g.) They had extensive conversations with Him**, not just fleeting appearances, and He appeared to them “by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of 40 days”. In other words, **He appeared to them many more times than what we have record of, and He spoke with them and taught them much more than what they wrote down for us in our gospel accounts.**

4.) **The Transformation of the Disciples.** These men, who *had fled the scene* of the arrest, and *were hiding* behind locked doors “for fear of the Jews” (Jn. 20:19) were, within 50 days, *openly proclaiming* Jesus’ resurrection, even confronting *to their faces* the very authorities they had feared (Acts 4:8-10). To a man, *none* returned to his former career. *Every one* of them spread the gospel far and wide. They received *no* wealth, fame or power for their efforts. Paul tells us *they endured great hardship and abuse* for their efforts (I Cor. 4:9-13). All except John died a martyr’s death. Yet *none of them recanted* their explanation for the faith that they possessed -- Jesus is Risen!

5.) **The Coming of the Holy Spirit, the Birth of the Church, and the Testimony of Believers Throughout History.** There is no reasonable explanation for these events, especially the *ongoing* experience of believers, unless Christ actually *did* rise from the dead, and sent the Holy Spirit, as He said He would (Jn. 14:16,17; 15:26,27; Acts 2:32,33).

HE IS RISEN, INDEED!! *Let everyone know that He is Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:24-35)!*