

Raised

The promise of Christ's resurrection is everywhere in the gospels, and one of the most amazing things is that the disciples **didn't understand it before it happened**. Jesus said so many times and in so many ways, "after three days I will rise again." But they just didn't get it. And even if they had, the events of the last two days would have shattered their faith.

They had been with Him at the last supper as He spoke mysteriously of "one who would betray me" and struck fear into their hearts as they asked "Is it I?" They had been with Him in the garden as He prayed in agony for so long that they finally fell asleep from exhaustion. They were there when Judas came to betray Him and they realized the horror of what His earlier words really meant. They tried to defend Him, but who could stand against a Roman legion? They had followed Jesus at a distance, lurking in the shadows and outside the gates as He was put through the mockery of six trials between night and morning. They heard the fabricated evidence and outright lies against Him, and their hearts sunk at the resounding verdict of "guilty" that echoed from each trial.

They had seen Jesus scourged until He could no longer stand under His own power, His skin literally ripped off in huge gaping patches. They had seen the makeshift crown of thorns pressed into His scalp until His face was dripping with blood; they had seen Him slapped, pummeled and punched until His countenance was permanently marred and He seemed only a grotesque caricature of a man.

They had hoped beyond hope that when Jesus was taken before the crowds that this nightmare would finally be over. Surely the thousands He had taught and the hundreds He had healed would stand up for Him and convince the Romans that He was harmless to their empire! But with growing horror they watched the mob, under the evil influence of the Sanhedrin, turn a convicted murderer loose and scream "Crucify Him!" until Pilate was pressured to act. They had watched, engulfed by the angry mob, scared for their very lives, as Jesus was nailed to the cross and hoisted in the air, hanging naked and humiliated as He writhed in agony. They had watched his labored breathing and groans of pain, fully aware that crucifixion was really death by suffocation. They had heard the last cry, "It is finished," but all their ears heard was, "I am finished."

They were there when a Roman soldier pierced Jesus' rib cage with a spear, one final injury that screamed the final verdict: He's dead! They were there when His unrecognizable body was unfastened from the cross and laid on the cold ground to be wrapped for burial. They were in the weeping, grieving procession that carried Jesus to a borrowed tomb. They were there when the huge stone was rolled in place. They had to take that long walk home to a life that no longer existed.

You can chide them for their unbelief if you wish, berate them for their lack of vision, and scold them for not hanging around to see the miracle a few hours later. But you didn't go through the agony that they did! You weren't there on Friday when Jesus died! They didn't have an inspiring drama, a concert or a beautiful sunrise service to attend; there had never been an Easter Sunday. Only a Friday that was far from "good."

The miracle of the resurrection was **TOTALLY UNEXPECTED** by the disciples, even though it had been promised so many times by Jesus. That's why, when it happened in such power and glory, it literally became the **FOUNDATION** of the New Testament Church and all of Christianity. Listen to the language of the apostles ...

1 Corinthians 15:13-20 But **if** there be no resurrection of the dead, **then** is Christ not risen: And **if** Christ be not risen, **then** is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, **if** so be that the dead rise not. For **if** the dead rise not, **then** is not Christ raised: And **if** Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. **Then** they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. **If** in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now **is** Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

IF/THEN statements – Christianity hangs on Christ's resurrection!

What is so important about the resurrection? It proves that Jesus was who He claimed to be – He was God in the flesh! Of all the claims that Jesus made, the claim that He would rise from the death was the most audacious – and He made it many times. Sometimes He said it subtly, and sometimes He said it outright ...

John 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

Matthew 20:18-19 Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.

Jesus allowed himself to be put on trial and crucified just so there would be no doubt about who He was. When He was hanging on the cross, the skeptics and critics mocked him, "If you're the Son of God, why don't you just come down from that cross and show that you're really God?" Jesus had something more spectacular planned – "I'm going to let you bury me for three days, then I'll come back to life to prove I am who I said I am."

Easter is the good news about Jesus Christ our Lord, who died for our sins and then rose from the dead. Four historical records say he showed himself to 500 people at one gathering. Can you imagine witnessing his death and then seeing him walking around Jerusalem three days later? That clinched it! The city of Jerusalem was the very last place on earth Christianity could have started if Jesus' tomb remained occupied!

Now anyone can claim to be God, but how do you prove it? You prove it by rising from the dead! When Jesus came out of the grave, that one act validated everything else He ever said about himself. The founders of other religions said, "Follow me – and I'll show you the way to truth." Jesus said, "Follow me – I AM the way, the truth and the life!"

Romans 1:4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

Easter says that you can put truth in a grave, but it won't stay there!

But the message of Easter doesn't stop with the resurrection of Jesus Christ; in fact, just after the gospels theology takes an exciting turn ...

Acts 26:22-23 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the **first** that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the **Gentiles**.

1 Corinthians 6:14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

Romans 6:4-5 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in **newness of life**. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

LIFE IS WHAT YOU ARE ALIVE TO! Paul wrote, "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). Paul was alive to Christ and dead to anything that opposed that relationship – and so it should be with every believer. I read about two friends who enjoyed the "party life." After they were converted they received an invitation to a wild party and sent their RSVP in these words: "We regret that we cannot attend because we recently died."

Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Ephesians 2:6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

The late US Senator Hubert Humphrey once said: "You must remember that in politics, how you stand depends on where you sit." How I stand depends on where I sit; and I am seated with Christ in His kingdom! The Queen of England exercises certain powers and privileges because she sits on the throne. The President of the United States has privileges and powers because he sits behind the desk in the oval office of the White House. Likewise the Prime Minister of Canada. But the believer is seated on the throne with Christ in a position of power and privilege!

Colossians 3:1-4 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

The theologians would say that ...

- Christ died FOR us (substitution)
- We died WITH Christ (identification)
- Christ died FOR sin, bearing its penalty
- Christ died UNTO sin, breaking its power
- And we obtain it all, because we are IN CHRIST through salvation

I would say it this way ...

- The message of Easter is not just that CHRIST got up from the grave
- The message of Easter is that I got up with Him!
- Through my obedience to the gospel in repentance, baptism and receiving the Holy Ghost I identified with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection
- And every day a new area of my life is resurrected!

The promise of OUR resurrection is everywhere in the Scriptures, but just like the disciples, **we don't understand it until it happens to us!**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church. Our resurrection with Him (the Holy Ghost) is the foundation of our new life!

Unusual footnote ... the only time "Easter" occurs in the Bible ...

Acts 12:4 And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; **intending after Easter** to bring him forth to the people.

Herod was going to participate in a religious observance on Easter, but then go right back to his sin (putting Peter to death)! **What about YOU?!**