

What if the Resurrection is True?

Guess what today is? Well I can tell you one thing for certain! It's not Friday? It's not Saturday! Today everyone is Sunday! Read with me and let me explain what that means for Christians!

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. 2 Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb 3 and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" 4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.

5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. 6 "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here.

Now some people have a problem with the empty tomb and the resurrection. We will get into that a little later. But if it is true; then there are some serious implications. I want to get into some of those right away. There are four points I would like to make! Here is number one. If the resurrection is true.....

It means we need to worship because Sunday has a come! In the Jewish calendar the first day of the week begins on Sunday. Over here in the west we have it all wrong. It shouldn't begin with Monday because no one really likes Mondays. It should begin with us worshipping God because the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most important event in human history.

One of the hardest things I gave up when I became a Christian at the age of 26 was my Sunday morning football games. It still kills me when the Pittsburgh Steelers are slated for that early game. Sunday used to be my day of rest where I can sleep in, veg on the couch, and watch the football games in my underwear and tube socks. But something happened along the way. I discovered that Sundays weren't for Kene, Sunday's where for Jesus. You see the resurrection of Jesus Christ compels me to get out of bed and worship Jesus.

If the resurrection is true we don't come to church because it's Friday; we come here because Sunday has a come. The tomb was empty; the linen strips remained, the body was gone, and the angel proclaimed He has risen!! Sunday has a come! I sacrifice sleep! I sacrifice football! I sacrifice the couch! I sacrifice my personal needs because Sunday has a come and I want to show him my appreciation by worshipping Him! Okay, here is point two. If the resurrection is true.....

It means that the message of Jesus was true. This was as much a problem in the days of Christ as it is now. There were several people who did not want his message to be true. Here is one example. After Jesus was placed in the tomb the religious leaders went to Pilate, the Roman official in charge and made this request.

Matthew 27:62-66

62 The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate.
63 "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.'
64 So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."
65 "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how."
66 So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

Unfortunately, this plan backfired on these religious leaders because despite the Roman seal on the tomb and the guards, the body of Jesus disappeared. Then they reverted to plan B.

Matthew 28:12-15

12 When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, 13 telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' 14 If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble."

15 So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

To this day people some still hold to the theory that the disciples stole the body. Others, many religious leaders, come up with other theories like Jesus was given a drug that gave the impression that he was dead. Others say the person on the cross was an imposter and Jesus never died. In our culture we discard miracles like the resurrection as purely superstition. Why do we do this? Simply because if the resurrection is true, it authenticated his message and that he was sent from God! What was his message? Paul, one of his apostles, summarizes it succinctly.

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Defining Sin: One of the most controversial sayings in Christendom is that Christ died for our sins. The easiest way to define sin is to say we have failed to hit the mark when it comes to God. We have failed to live by His standards and we have trusted in ourselves for our own salvation. Basically sin says this: I don't need God and I can live my by my own rules and standards. Now there are some people who may acknowledge God from time to time, but when you divide their life in pieces like a pie, God hardly has a small piece leftover. Most of the pie focuses on us!

It would be like me not acknowledging my son Korban for the majority of my life and then hoping he would believe I loved Him. He would probably say, "You are my dad, but you barely recognized me as your son, you were so selfish and consumed in your own world; yes, I know you're my dad but I don't believe you ever really loved me because you never really demonstrated it. That would hurt me very much and we likewise hurt God. Everyone has fallen short of loving God like He ought to be loved except for one person, his name is Jesus! So when it says he died for your sins, it means not only that he loved God completely like we are incapable of—he also loved you enough to take your sins against God and place them on himself. That is why I like to call him the Great Substitute. Now anyone could say they died for your sins, but their message becomes more believable if they actually come back from the dead.

Perhaps the greatest witness to the message of Christ is that the church has ballooned since that Sunday and has the most followers in the world today. It all began with the testimony of eyewitnesses. At the end of the passage Paul, the author, lists these eye witnesses, including himself.

Chronological Snobbery: Now some folks have been guilty of what C.S. Lewis refers to as "chronological snobbery," which basically asserts that the people who lived during the time of Christ were primitive and superstitious because they did not have the science and knowledge that we have today. For them a demonic possession is simply a psychosis, maybe a dual personality or schizophrenia. If you have ever watched any of those documentaries on National Geographic or the Discover Channel, chronological snobbery is demonstrated in the way they try to explain miraculous events in the Bible from a naturalistic mindset. I actually watched one the other day where they explained the ten plagues of Egypt during the time of Moses without mentioning that God had any part in those events. Here is the problem with chronological snobbery when it comes to the resurrection. The primitive folks during the time of Jesus did not believe in the resurrection of Christ either; but for different reasons than our modern world today. You find this when you study anthropology.

At the time of Jesus Palestine was influenced by two different worldviews, Hellenistic and Jewish thought. The Hellenists denied the resurrection because they believed the material world, which includes the body, was evil. The hope was that one day the spirit would escape the body at physical death and be set free. The body was viewed as a sort of prison. So the idea that Christ was physically raised from the dead contradicted their whole belief system. It was repulsing!

Now most Jews on the other hand, did believe in the resurrection of the body. But they believed the dead would be raised at the end of time. When this occurred, they were taught, it would be a time of worldwide peace with no more sickness, disease, pain, strife, wars, you name it. The resurrected body to them signified the end of the age. As a result, when Jesus taught that he would rise from the dead in three days, they thought he was crazy. That is why the religious leaders guarded the tomb. The idea that Jesus has been raised and there was still sickness, pain, disease, wars, duress, went completely against their belief system. So you can see, even the “primitive” people thought the resurrection of Jesus was an impossibility.

But Paul says to the church; we are witnesses of his resurrection and on that reality we stand firm for Jesus (vs. 1-2)! He says what he has received; he now passes on to them. We have to remember these folks experienced martyrdom because they saw Jesus with their own eyes and kept spreading the news. You don't die for something you made up; you die for something you believe. They died because the resurrection of Jesus validated his message was true.

Okay, that's points one and two; here is number three. If the resurrection is true.....

It should affect the way we treat others. We should be treating other people with respect and living humble lives. The Bible goes on to say that we should treat others better than ourselves. If the resurrection is true we should be living our lives in appreciation to Jesus and loving on others on a regular basis. We should be forgiving others that have wronged us, asking forgiveness from others, loving our friends unconditionally, loving our spouses like Christ loved the church, and looking for opportunities to be a blessing to others. Unfortunately, too many times other things get in the way.

Legalism: One of them can be legalism. Legalism is when you live your life by a set of rules and try to enforce those on others. For example, some insist Christians can't smoke, they can't drink, they can't dance, they can't get tattoos, and they can't listen to a certain kind of music. Legalistic people make you feel bad if you don't measure up to their standards. Now there are many legalistic Christians that are seriously trying to dedicate their life to God by avoiding certain things—that is commendable. Where they fail is when they try to impose their convictions on you. Some folks just don't have the same convictions. As a general rule, we should follow the teachings of the Bible, what is legal in our society, and our own conscience. We may feel compelled not to smoke or drink, but we can't force our convictions on others or make them feel bad.

Politics: Another area where Christians fail is when they get in heated arguments about political issues like abortion or gay marriage, or assisted suicide. It is okay to disagree with someone, but we can't jeopardize our relationships with others over them. When we get downright and nasty about our position we lose focus of the resurrection. The resurrection should prompt us to be gentle, humble people, who recognize no matter how smart we are; no matter how moral we are; we must never use those things to bring people down.

Self-Righteousness: Finally, Christians often get accused of thinking they are better than others. There are many who feel Christians are self-righteous and belligerent because they insist Jesus is the only way. I spoke to my childhood friend yesterday driving home from Tacoma and he said, Christians think they have the upper hand on the truth and think they are better than us. I tried to explain they shouldn't feel that way. If anyone can use the phrase “You think you are better than me” it should be the Christian referring to the unbeliever.

Here's why? Christians should be aware that there is nothing they can do to earn God's favor because of sin. They should recognize they need Jesus. Unbelievers, on the other hand, generally trust themselves to make it into heaven. Byron, my childhood friend, kept saying over and over again that he is a good person and that God wouldn't judge him. I just smiled and said that the truth of the matter is that you think you are better than me. Bewildered he exclaimed, “What!” You see, I know God is not impressed with Kene, and no matter how many good things I have done in my life; God is not going to give me an out of jail card because of my righteousness. The only reason I am given a pass is because I believe Christ died for my sins and was raised from the dead. In the end, the only difference between Byron and I is that I recognize my deficiencies and asked Christ into my life. When we get to the point where we daily humble ourselves to that reality; that is the time we will make a difference for Jesus with others in our lives. Okay here is the last point: If the resurrection is true.....

It means we should share the Good News of Christ. I never imagined that one day I would become a pastor. I wasn't raised in the church, I did not attend church until my late twenties and by that time I was so far behind the last thing I ever expected was to become a pastor. What made matters worse is that when I went to church it was hard to fit in because I was different and I knew it. But the good thing through this whole experience was that I had heart-felt questions and that I knew how to connect with my culture that did not believe in God. There are two things that I have a heart for as a man and as a pastor. 1. That I will be a vehicle where many people come to place their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. 2. That those that are Christians will have a faith that is active and will always want to grow. I want to close today by giving both groups an opportunity to respond to God. Now so no one feels ostracized, I want to ask everyone to repeat what I say after me. What you say with your lips we will all hear. What we won't know is how you feel in your heart. Ultimately that is what is important to God.

Group 1: Lord I acknowledge you as God and the creator of everything, including me. I also acknowledge that my sin, the way I have lived my life, has kept me from having a relationship with you. Lord I confess that reality and I promise to change. I believe that you died as a substitute for my sins. I trust in you with all my heart as my Savior. I accept your presence in my life and pledge to live my life honoring you.

Group 2: Lord Jesus, I confess that I have not been living my life as a Christian the way you want me to and I am capable of living. I confess I have become comfortable and have not sought more opportunities to grow as a follower of you. I now commit myself to doing better, taking more chances for Jesus, and loving others how you have loved me. Thank you for dying on the cross for me. Thank you for your resurrection from the dead which brings me life. I promise to chance so that I can be come more like you.

If you prayed that first prayer and believe it with all your heart. There may have been a time you did not know Jesus, but now that time has passed. The Scriptures teach you have been saved because of Jesus and the angels are rejoicing in heaven. Congratulations.

If you prayed the second one in your heart Jesus loves you and he is proud that you have confessed what you did. His arms are open wide and you can be assured he has some work for you to do. Trust him, seek him, and take chances for him. Amen.