

THE MEANING OF THE RESURRECTION

The resurrection demonstrates that Jesus is everything he claims to be, can do everything he claims to do and that we one day will be raised with him.

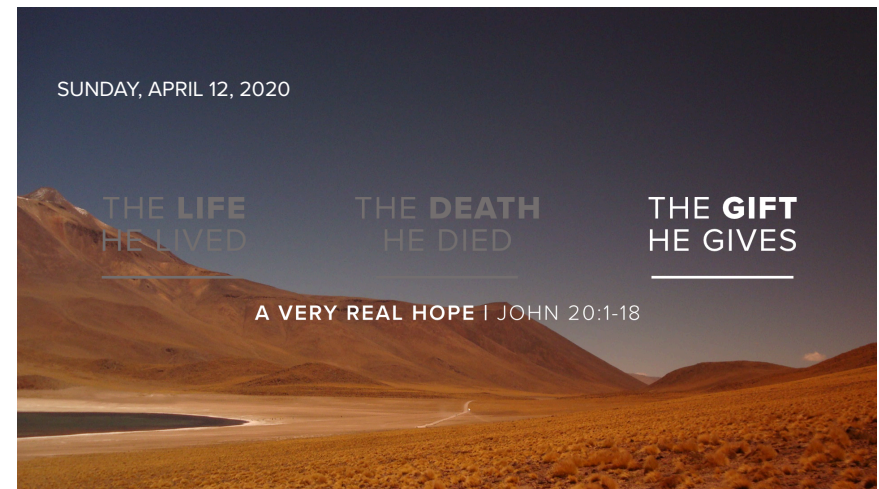
1. How do the New Testament writers describe the person of Christ?
2. How does the resurrection demonstrate that he is indeed, everything they claim he is?
3. What does Jesus offer to those who trust in him?
4. How does the resurrection demonstrate that Jesus has the ability to make good on his offer?
5. What does the Bible claim will one day happen to us and all of creation?
6. How does the resurrection reassure us that God's purposes for us and the rest of creation will indeed be realized?
7. How should the resurrection change the way we live?

FOR FURTHER READING

- Allison, Dale C. 2005. *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and Its Interpreters*. London: T&T Clark.
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- Licona, Michael R. 2010. *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.
- Wright, N. T. 2003. *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. COQG 3; London: SPCK— . 2007. *Surprised by Hope*. London: SPCK.

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The resurrection is the heart of the Christian story. It is far more than a marvel of history. It is a demonstration of God's power to fulfill His promises in Jesus and in us. Each of the gospel writers tells the resurrection story in their own way, but they are all telling the same story. John's account of the resurrection is one of the more personal and intimate recollections of the first Easter morning.

JOHN 20:1-18 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.

² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

³ So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in.

⁶ Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen.

⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

¹⁷ Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' "

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

THE RESURRECTION IN JOHN

1. What are some of the personal touches John includes in his account?
2. What do these touches add to the story?
3. Why do you think the disciples are slow to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead?
4. Describe the range of emotions Mary must have experienced on that first Easter morning?
5. Why do you think Jesus encouraged Mary not to hold on to him?

THE RESURRECTION IN THE GOSPELS

1. The gospel stories vary in their details. Some describe four women, others one. Some two angels, others one. Some record appearances of Jesus in Jerusalem, others in Galilee. They seem to record the order of the events differently. Critics site the differences as evidence that the Gospel writers had a hard time getting their story straight.
 - a. If we were all to witness a cataclysmic event, like a car crash, how might our stories vary?
 - b. How would you know we had all actually witnessed the same event?
 - c. How does the fact that the gospel writers tell the stories differently lend credibility to their story?

2. In the ancient world, women were not considered credible witnesses. One scholar describes their testimony as "legally worthless." The ancient historian Josephus wrote, "From women let no evidence be accepted, because of the levity and temerity of their sex (The New Testament in Its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians)."
 - a. How does the fact that women were the first witnesses to the risen Lord lend credibility to the Gospel accounts
 - b. What does the fact that Jesus chose to reveal himself to women first tell us about Jesus and the gospel?

THREE STUBBORN FACTS OF HISTORY

The resurrection is built around three stubborn historical facts. The tomb was empty. The disciples were convinced that Jesus physically appeared to them. An unlikely movement was born out of the event.

1. The disciples had categories for hallucinations, visions, and spiritual apparitions. Yet, they were convinced that the risen Lord had a physical body. What are some of the things that would have convinced them that Jesus was physically alive, and not just a figment of their imagination?
2. If they had seen visions of Jesus, but his body was still in the tomb, what would they have concluded?
3. If the tomb was empty, but they had not witnessed the risen Christ, what would they have concluded?
4. Some have conjectured that Jesus may have only appeared to be dead and later revived in the tomb. Or the disciples removed his body and fabricated the story of the resurrection to keep the movement alive. Why are these inadequate explanations?
5. How does the New Testament describe the behavior of the disciples before and after the resurrection?
6. Why is the resurrection the best explanation of the radical change that took place in their lives?
7. Why is the resurrection the best explanation of the rapid growth of the church in the Mediterranean world?