



Talmid תלמיד a Hebrew word that means “a true disciple who desires to be what the Rabbi Jesus is.”

Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did. 1 John 2:6 (NIV)

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STUDY TO SHEW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD, A WORKMAN THAT NEEDETH NOT TO BE ASHAMED, RIGHTLY
DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH. 2 TIMOTHY 2:15



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His Resurrection is our Assurance

Imagine what the Bible would be like if we cut out all of the references that deal with Christ's resurrection. It would be no different from other religious records which detail the lives and deaths of their founders. The difference here is that the Scriptures record not only the life and death of Jesus Christ but also His resurrection as the living Savior.

The difference between being followers of Christ and followers of other gods is that we serve a living God. Jesus' resurrection validated everything He said, and that is the reason we believe everything He said about Jehovah God.

The only people in the world who have

a God who can deliver them from their distresses are those of us who have trusted in Jehovah, the living God; and we have been introduced to Him by the living, resurrected Christ. If Jesus Christ had not risen from the dead, what assurance would you and I have that Jehovah God even existed?

Christ's resurrection assures us that we have eternal salvation. Other religions have their plans of salvation, but here is the difference: Other religions major on performance. Their salvation depends upon what they do as individuals.

When Jesus cried from the cross, “**It is finished,**” that was His declaration that His part in God's redemptive plan was completed. When God the Father raised Him from the dead, that was God's declaration that the plan was in full effect—and now all men everywhere are invited for the forgiveness of their sins.

God validated His plan of salvation with the resurrection of Christ. Jesus made ours a “know so” faith. His resurrection proved forever that everything He promised He had the power to provide. Apart from the Resurrection, you wouldn't have that assurance. You would face death and God with only a “**hope so**” faith.

Those who do not understand the atonement of Jesus Christ only hope that God will accept them.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ assures us that you and I can face all of our tomorrows triumphantly.

Jesus said to Mary and Martha: **“He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live”** ([John 11:25](#)). Jesus has become our life! Paul said, **“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me”** ([Galatians 2:20](#)).

None of us knows what tomorrow holds for us. It could be tragedy or triumph. It could be sickness or health, poverty or prosperity, fame or the opposite. But we have the blessed promise of Jehovah God through His Son, Jesus Christ the Righteous One.

The greatest event in the history of the church of Jesus Christ is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Without this event there would be no church and no salvation. It was the resurrection of Jesus Christ which transformed His disciples into fervent evangelists of the Gospel and brought dramatic and eternal changes into the lives and hearts of multitudes of people throughout the world in the last two millenniums. The Apostle Paul summed it up when he said, **“If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain ... ye are yet in your sins”** ([1 Corinthians 15:14, 17](#)).

Many significant observances of our day are in reference to the resurrection. As an example, the fact that churches hold services on Sunday is a testimony of the resurrection of Christ which changed the day of worship from the Saturday Sabbath to the first day of the week—the day when Christ rose from the grave. Another example is in Easter. One of the greatest religious celebrations of the year is Easter, and that all came about because of the resurrection. Though the season is terribly perverted by many celebrations, the fact that it is observed faithfully every year attests to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Without the resurrection there would be no Easter observances whatever.

STONE

(The Tomb Opened)

[MATTHEW 28:2-4](#)

THE FIRST EVENT chronologically following the resurrection of Jesus Christ which the Gospels record is logically the opening of the tomb from which

Christ had already left because of His resurrection. Only Matthew records this event. But it is important that Matthew records the event; for it answers some questions about what the women, the first people to come to the tomb on Easter morning, found when they came to the tomb. On the way they worried about who would move the stone for them ([Mark 16:3](#)) so they could get into the tomb to administer more spices to Christ's body and tidy up what Joseph and Nicodemus had done when they hurriedly put Christ in the tomb right after the crucifixion. But when they got to the tomb, they found that stone was already rolled away. How did the stone get rolled away? Our Matthew text answers that question. Furthermore, the women found no soldiers keeping watch of the tomb—these soldiers had been put on this duty on the Sabbath day (day before the resurrection) at the requests of the Jewish religious leaders ([Matthew 27:62-66](#)). So what happened to them? Why were they not guarding the tomb? Matthew answers that question, too. And Matthew also reports that when the women arrived at the tombs they encountered angels at the tomb.

Interestingly, though Matthew is the only one to report such things as the Easter earthquake, the opening of the tomb, the reaction of the soldiers, the soldiers' report to the religious leaders, and the bribing of the soldiers by the religious leaders, “The account of the resurrection of the Lord as given by Matthew is the briefest of all the Gospels” ([Gaebelein](#)). But though brief, it is indispensable because of the information it does give concerning the resurrection events.

To further study this text in Matthew about the moving of the stone from the tomb of Christ, we will note the shaking ([Matthew 28:2](#)), the seraphim ([Matthew 28:2-3](#)), and the sentries ([Matthew 28:4](#)) spoken of in the text regarding the moving of the stone from the grave of Christ.

A. THE SHAKING

During the crucifixion, an earthquake was reported. It was no small earthquake, for Scripture reports that rocks were broken apart from the quake ([Matthew 27:51](#)). The earthquake at the crucifixion was not the only earthquake at this time, however; for another earthquake occurred right after the resurrection. Only Matthew records this earthquake. We note three things from our Matthew text about this earthquake which occurred shortly after the resurrection. They are the *moment* of the earthquake, the *magnitude* of the earthquake, and

the *message* in the earthquake.

1. The Moment of the Earthquake

“Behold, there was a great earthquake” ([Matthew 28:2](#)). The “was” in the text indicates the moment of the earthquake. While the moment cannot be ascertained to the exact hour, it can be determined that the earthquake occurred before the women of [Matthew 28:1](#) came to the tomb. Barnes said of the “was” in the sentence, “Rather there *had been*. It does not mean that this was while they [the women] were there, or while they were going, but that there *had been* ... [a] violent ... commotion.” This earthquake occurred after the resurrection, for it was “occasioned by the descending angel” ([Gaebelin](#)). And as we noted in the introduction of this point, this earthquake is not to be equated with the one that occurred during the crucifixion when the veil in the Temple was rent in twain ([Matthew 27:51](#)). The earthquake of our text was a separate earthquake which occurred at a different time than the earthquake which occurred during the crucifixion. There were two separate earthquakes within three days associated with the passion of Christ.

2. The Magnitude of the Earthquake

“Great (severe) earthquake” ([Matthew 28:2](#)). To examine the magnitude of this earthquake, we note the *proof* of the magnitude, the *power* of the magnitude, and the *perspective* of the magnitude.

The proof of the magnitude. The word “great” describes the earthquake as one of considerable magnitude and might. “Great” is the proof in our text that the earthquake was one of considerable magnitude. It was not a small earthquake but a “great” one. The word “great” is translated from the Greek word which gives us “mega” as in such words as megaphone (an instrument for magnifying sound), megalopolis (a large city), and megabyte (computer language for a million bytes). The Richter scale was not invented yet, so the measurement given in our text of the earthquake was simply “great” to denote a major earthquake, one of great magnitude.

The power of the magnitude. The power of the earthquake is emphasized in the word “great.” And a “great” earthquake is going to leave a large foot-

print of destruction. Scripture, however, does not report any of the destruction caused by this earthquake. But in reporting it in conjunction with the removal of the stone from the tomb in which Christ had been laid after His crucifixion, it is quite evident that the earthquake was that which broke the seal of the stone. Scripture does not say that the angel broke the seal of the stone though the angel could have done that with ease, but noting what the earthquake did in Philippi when Paul was in prison would show that this earthquake could indeed be the agent of God to break the seal of the stone covering the entrance of the tomb. The earthquake in Philippi, when Paul and Silas were in prison, loosed the bands of the prisoners ([Acts 16:26](#)). Man thinks he is so powerful, but God can send an earthquake to undo all that man has done in opposition to God’s work. The stone covering the entrance to the tomb had been sealed shut by the enemies of Christ on the day following the burial ([Matthew 27:62–66](#)). But the earthquake could do a quick work in breaking the seal. “There is a sublime irony in the contrast between man’s elaborate precautions and the ease with which the Divine Hand can sweep them aside, and which, as throughout the history of the Christ and of His Church, recalls the prophetic declaration: ‘He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh at them.’” ([Edersheim](#)).

The perspective of the magnitude. Unbelief challenges the earthquake report because it is not reported in the other three Gospels. It may seem strange to some that a “great” earthquake goes unreported by three of the Gospels. But the fact that the other Gospels do not report the earthquake is certainly not surprising. After all, there was bigger news than a “great” earthquake to report. That bigger news was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. An earthquake, no matter how big it might be, is back page news compared to the great headline news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, today most folk are more interested in earthquakes than the resurrection. But our faith is built on the resurrection, not on any earthquake. Our eternal hopes are built on the resurrection, not on an earthquake. That puts the earthquake in perspective. It may have been a “great” earthquake that would get world attention today, but the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so much more important than any “great” earthquake that it gets the front page headline and the earthquake gets the back page notice if it gets any notice at all—and Mark, Luke, and John did not even deem it important enough to note. Matthew’s noting of it was simply because of its association with the

stone removal.

How much we need to get this perspective about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is so very, very, very important; for if Christ is not risen from the grave our faith is empty, vain, and worthless ([1 Corinthians 15:14](#)). “The fact of the resurrection is the key-stone of Christianity. Disprove the resurrection of our Lord, and our holy faith would be a mere fable; there would be nothing for faith to rest upon if He who died upon the tree did not also rise again from the tomb ... All the great doctrines of our divine religion fall asunder like the stones of an arch when the key-stone is dislodged” ([Spurgeon](#)). [Bishop Ryle](#) said, “We need not wonder that so much importance is attached to our Lord’s resurrection. It is the seal and headstone of the great work of redemption, which He came to do. It is the crowning proof that He has paid the debt which He undertook to pay on our behalf, won the battle which He fought to deliver us from hell, and is accepted as our Surety and our Substitute by our Father in heaven. Had He never come forth from the prison of the grave, how could we ever have been sure that our ransom had been fully paid?... Had He never risen from His conflict with the last enemy, how could we have felt confident, that He has overcome death, and him that had the power of death, that is the devil? ([Hebrews 2:14](#)). But thanks be unto God ... The Lord Jesus really ‘rose again for our justification.’ True Christians are ‘begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.’ ”

3. The Message in the Earthquake

The earthquake associated with the resurrection of Christ sends at least three significant messages. They are a *message of conquest*, a *message of change*, and a *message of condemnation*.

A message of conquest. “Behold, there was a great earthquake” ([Matthew 28:2](#)). “The earthquake was a royal trumpet to proclaim this victory, the greatest that ever was obtained against an enemy. The deep murmur and hollow sound which came from beneath the earth gave notice, at one blast, to heaven and hell and to all Judea that the Son of God about that instant ... did break the gates of brass, and smite the bars of death in sunder” ([Bishop Hacket](#)). [A. T. Robertson](#), in com-

menting on the significance of the earthquake, quoted [Cornelius à Lapide](#) who said, “The earth, which trembled with sorrow at the Death of Christ, as it were, leaped for joy at His Resurrection.” The earthquake signaled the conquest of Christ over the power of sin and death. The earthquake emphasizes the power of the resurrection.

A message of change. Like the earthquake at the crucifixion, this earthquake accompanied a new dispensation. In our book on the crucifixion of Jesus Christ we noted that earthquakes accompanied the beginning of new dispensations. As an example, it accompanied the ushering in of the dispensation of the law when an earthquake accompanied the giving of the law on the mount to Moses ([Exodus 19:18](#)). In like manner, the dispensation of grace (the Gospel) was accompanied by an earthquake at the crucifixion and at the resurrection.

A message of condemnation. “Behold, there was a great earthquake” ([Matthew 28:2](#)). Judgment can also be seen in this earthquake for its destruction upon the enemies’ work against Christ at the grave in sealing the tomb. As we noted about the earthquake at the crucifixion, earthquakes reported in the Bible generally carry a message of judgment with them. When the earthquakes, God is flexing His power against sin. When an earthquake is reported in Scripture, God is speaking. Of course, scientists and worldly philosophers will mock the conclusion that God is speaking in judgment in earthquakes. But mocking the fact that God is speaking in judgment through earthquakes only prolongs man’s ignorance and increases his peril.

We note here some Scripture texts carrying the judgment message in earthquakes.

[Psalm 18:7](#): “The earth shook and trembled; and foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.”

[Isaiah 29:6](#): “Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.” [Isaiah 29](#) is speaking about judgment upon Jerusalem for their sinfulness. And one of those judgments listed for Jerusalem for her sin is “earthquake.”

[Amos 1:1](#): “The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Is-

rael in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.” Uzziah did many great things as king of Judah, but great sin abounded in the land of Israel in both the northern and southern kingdoms during his reign. One of the judgments that came upon Israel as a result of their sin was a great earthquake. This one which occurred during Uzziah’s time was such a great one that it is mentioned some two to three hundred years later by the prophet Zechariah in his book which we will note next.

[Zechariah 14:4-5](#): “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof ... And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal; yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah.” There will be a great earthquake when Jesus Christ returns to earth. It will occur in the Mount of Olives. Judgment is associated with this coming. Zechariah says it will cause people to panic just as the great earthquake did during Uzziah’s time. Interestingly, scientists have discovered a major fault underneath the Mount of Olives. Some years ago a major hotel chain wanted to build a hotel on the Mount. But after having some specialists investigate the Mount, they decided not to build the hotel because the investigators reported a serious fault under the Mount which could precipitate an earthquake which could be very disastrous for any hotel built on the Mount.

[Matthew 24:7](#) (cp. **[Mark 13:8](#)** and **[Luke 21:11](#)**): “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.” End time conditions are addressed here and “great earthquakes ... in divers places” (**[Luke 21:11](#)**) is one of the conditions. The great increase in earthquakes in our day ought to cause some soul trembling, but the unbelieving world mocks any connection of earthquakes with Divine action.

[Revelation 6:12](#); **[8:5](#)**; **[11:13](#)**; **[11:19](#)**; **[16:18](#)** all speak of earthquakes in relation to judgment. Revelation is speaking of end-time judgment upon the

earth, and at that time earthquakes will indeed be used to bring judgment upon the earth for sin.

B. THE SERAPHIM

Our Matthew text, which reports the removal of the stone from the entrance of Christ’s tomb, also reports the presence and action of an angel in regards to the removal of the stone. To examine this report about the angel, we note the abode of the angel, the action of the angel, and the appearance of the angel.

1. The Abode of the Angel

“The angel of the Lord descended from heaven” (**[Matthew 28:2](#)**). The angel (other Gospels will inform us that this was not the only angel that came to the tomb) came from heaven to do honor for Jesus Christ at the tomb. Angels are “supernatural beings ... who assume human form at will and can disappear suddenly” (**[Ironsides](#)**). They are called by various names in the Scriptures. We have used the name “seraphim” here for the angels. The name “seraphim” is found in the book of Isaiah and refers there to Isaiah’s vision of seeing God upon His throne above which “stood the seraphims [angels]; each one had six wings” (**[Isaiah 6:1-2](#)**).

Being of heaven, the one thing you can say about all these angels is that they are in the business of honoring Jesus Christ. Kings of earth were not honoring Christ or interested in Christ and His tomb, but angels in heaven certainly were. Many things that the earth does not honor and that does not interest earth are given great honor in heaven and are of great interest in heaven. It will do us well to get in tune with heaven in whom we honor and in what our interests are.

Angels attended Christ during His earthly ministry. They were present at His birth (**[Luke 2:9, 13-15](#)**); they ministered to Him after the rugged temptation session with Satan (**[Matthew 4:11](#)**). An angel ministered to Christ when He was agonizing in the Garden of Gethsemane in prayer the night before the crucifixion (**[Luke 22:43](#)**). Angels showed up at the tomb after the resurrection, and they were also present at the ascension (**[Acts 1:10](#)**). Angels will accompany Christ when He returns to earth to establish His kingdom: “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory” (**[Matthew 25:31](#)**). The work of the angel at

the tomb, in speaking to the women who came to the tomb that first Easter morning, illustrates the ministry of angels for those who are followers of Jesus Christ. “**Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation**” ([Hebrews 1:14](#)).

2. The Action of the Angel

“**Came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it**” ([Matthew 28:2](#)). Matthew records the angel as doing two things regarding the stone which covered the opening to the tomb where Christ had been laid by Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus. These two actions were *removing the stone* and *residing on the stone*.

Removing the stone. Tombs carved in rock ledges sometimes had the opening of the tomb closed by a large stone that was cut in a round shape so it could be rolled in a channel (cut in the rock in front of the tomb opening) to close the opening of the tomb. Making the stone in front of the tomb with the ability to roll was a practical thing, for some of these tombs were large enough for more than one person. Thus the tomb could be opened for further burials. The tomb made by Joseph of Arimathaea was a large tomb and one that could hold more than one person. Christ, of course, was its first and only occupant.

Why did the angel roll the stone away from the tomb opening? It was certainly not so Christ could get out. Christ was already gone. “He had left His grave behind Him, not through a door opened by disciple fingers or angel fingers but without the opening of a door” ([Morgan](#)). His resurrection body would not need any stone rolled away so He could get out of the tomb. His resurrection body would simply pass right through the stone or wall of the tomb. Proof of this is seen in the fact that Jesus entered the room where the disciples were on Easter Sunday night even though the doors were closed to the room ([John 20:19](#)). The resurrected body is different in many aspects from the physical body and knows no limitations by physical barriers. So the angel did not roll the stone away to let Christ out—the angel rolled the stone away to let others in. It was an *entrance* not an *exit* that the angel was creating. It was necessary for the women and others to see that the tomb was empty. They would have diffi-

culty getting in if the stone was rolled across the opening. In fact the women were worried about that problem ([Mark 16:3](#)). The angel solved their worries. The stone rolled away from the opening of the tomb simply provided easy access to some proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ—in a later chapter we will note more about the evidence found in the empty tomb. Suffice it here to note that the angel rolled the stone away from the tomb’s opening to create an entrance not an exit.

In contrast, the tomb of Lazarus was opened so the occupant, Lazarus could come out ([John 11:39–44](#)). Lazarus needed the tomb to be opened, for he did not come out in a resurrected body but in a physical body.

Residing on the stone. “**And sat upon it**” ([Matthew 28:2](#)). After rolling the stone away from the opening of the tomb, the angel sat upon the stone. This sitting on the stone proclaims two important things. It proclaims *triumph* and *truth*.

First, triumph. The angel sitting on the stone “bespeaks a secure triumph over all the obstructions of Christ’s resurrection. There he sat, defying all the power of hell to roll the stone to the grave again” ([Henry](#)). Sitting on the stone was an emphatic statement that said the resurrection was an accomplished fact and that Christ was victorious over death, Satan, and hell.

Second, truth. The angel sitting on the stone was to make sure that the evidence of the resurrection was going to be available to the seekers. The angel would make sure that the tomb would remain open for all to enter in to see that Christ was not there. The angel would make sure that truth, not error, was proclaimed. The religious leaders, as we will see in a later chapter, tried to perpetrate the lie that the disciples of Christ had stolen the body from the grave. The angel, in the interests of truth, sits on the stone to make sure folk could enter the grave and see the evidence about the resurrection. Many apostates have tried to roll the stone back over the door to conceal the truth of Christ’s resurrection, but heaven works to keep the truth available for all to see. Satan wants the truth concealed, but the work of the angels shows that heaven wants to make the truth revealed. There is a great battle going on in the world regarding Divine truth. Many want to put Divine truth in a sealed tomb to keep it from the people. But heaven is in the business of illuminating men regarding the truth.

3. The Appearance of the Angel

“His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow” ([Matthew 28:3](#)). The word translated countenance is the Greek word meaning appearance. The appearance of the angel was very striking and traumatic to the viewers.

“The appearance of the angel reflects *heaven* and *holiness*. The one [lightning] expressing the glory [heaven], the other [white] the purity [holiness] of the celestial abode from which he [the angel] came” ([Brown](#)).

Heaven. “His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow.” The angel’s appearance was one of glory. The “lightning” speaks of the glittering of the glory. When Scripture speaks of heavenly beings, similar descriptions are given. During the transfiguration of Christ, His appearance was described in terms of shining as the “sun” ([Matthew 17:2](#)), “shining” ([Mark 9:3](#)), and “glistening” of radiance ([Luke 9:29](#)).

All of this says heaven is glorious in comparison to earth. Earth is dull and drab compared to heaven. Nothing of earth will outshine the splendor of heaven; but whenever heaven reveals itself on earth; its splendor far outshines anything on earth. We do well to evaluate all the glories of the earth in view of the great splendor of heaven. Too many folk think the bright lights of earth are where the splendor is, but heaven’s brightness will make the brightest of earth’s lights look as darkness.

Holiness. “His raiment [was] white as snow.” “Celestial beings are usually represented as clothed in white ... White ... was the symbol of purity or innocence” ([Barnes](#)). The emphasis on the holiness of God carries with it a warning note to mankind. White speaks of judgment upon sin. Holiness cannot tolerate evil and will war against evil and destroy it. When Christ returns, His brightness will destroy the Antichrist ([2 Thessalonians 2:8](#)). The angel reflects the holiness of heaven in his appearance at the tomb. Holiness triumphed over wickedness at the tomb. Wickedness brought darkness; holiness brings light.

C. THE SENTRIES

The day after the crucifixion the religious leaders, even though it was the Sabbath day, went to Pilate to request of him to have the tomb sealed and sentries posted at the tomb ([Matthew 27:62–66](#)). They were afraid the disciples might come and steal the body and proclaim the resurrection promise of Christ. They did not know that their fears were groundless. They succeeded in getting Pilate to grant permission to have the tomb sealed and to provide sentries to guard the tomb. The sentries watched the tomb faithfully, but they did not see Christ rise. What they did see was the angel and the opening of the tomb. Though rough and tough Roman soldiers, the sentries could not endure the coming of the angel to the tomb. The Matthew text for this chapter in our book reports their reaction to the angel. It was an embarrassing reaction for Roman soldiers, but it showed that God was in power, not Rome.

To study the sentries’ encounter with the angel at the tomb who rolled the stone away from the opening of the tomb, we note the fearing by the sentries, the fainting by the sentries, and the fleeing by the sentries. In the next teaching of our study, we will study in detail about the sentries after they fled the tomb.

1. The Fearing by the Sentries

“For fear of him the keepers did shake” ([Matthew 28:4](#)). The sentries, though hardened Roman soldiers, cowered when the angel came. “Those hardy Roman soldiers, though not unused to dreadful sights, saw a sight which made them quail. Their courage melted at once at the appearance of one angel of God” ([Ryle](#)). These soldiers were earthy men, and “thought of the spirit-land and impressions of reverence were not in their world; the shock they had received ... [was] sheer physical terror only. As horses are frightened in the flashes of the tempest, and the wild things of the woods are suddenly tame in the blow of any tremendous flood of fire; so these strong human animals were cowed by the lightning from an angel’s face. They would have been dauntless amidst the shock of battle ... but they were dumb before a being who was not flesh and blood” ([Stanford](#)).

Their fear was evidenced in their trembling. And this trembling was no small bit of trembling either. The word “shake” is from the same word as “earthquake.” [Williams](#) says, “The verb [shake] is cognate with the noun [earthquake] ... they were shaken, convulsed with terror.” [F. C. Cook](#) says, “The word [shake] indicates a

severe convulsion, as in an earthquake.” These “brave?” sentries “were told that they must expect to be assaulted by a company of feeble faint-hearted disciples, who for fear of them would soon shake and become as dead men, but are are amazed to find themselves attacked by a mighty angel whom they dare not look in the face. Thus doth God frustrate his enemies by frightening them” (**Henry**). These sentries are like Eliphaz, one of Job’s vain comforters, who told Job about his mysterious experience in which “**Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake**” (**Job 4:14**). Of the wicked, the Psalmist says, “**Put them in fear, O LORD; that the nations may know themselves to be but men**” (**Psalm 9:20**). Fear is a painful product of sin.

This trembling in fear before the heavenly visitor forecasts the great trembling which will take place when unrepentant sinners stand before the judgment bar of the Almighty.

2. The Fainting by the Sentries

“**And became as dead men**” (**Matthew 28:4**). “The effect of the angel’s coming to the foes of Christ was that of their absolute discomfiture. They became as dead men in the presence of the blinding glory of the angel visitor” (**Morgan**). Note the text carefully. It does not say the sentries died; but they were *like* dead men; that is, they fainted on the spot. They fell down on the ground in front of the tomb and looked like dead men. “In their fright at the appearance of this celestial messenger, the hard, sturdy soldiers of the guard fainted away, unable to look upon his terrifying countenance” (**Ironside**). “They were posted here, to keep a dead man in his grave—as easy a piece of service surely as was ever assigned them, and yet it proves too hard for them” (**Henry**). They did not remain in this condition indefinitely; for, as we will note next, they came to and got up and fled the place. The fainting though traumatic was temporary.

3. The Fleeing by the Sentries

Later in Matthew (**Matthew 28:11**) we are told that some of the sentries went to the chief priests and told them what had happened. The rest of the sentries also left their post of duty, for when the women came no sentries were around. So the sen-

tries fled the scene. Some went to the religious leaders, and some went elsewhere. They would, therefore, be no hindrance to anyone going into the grave to see the evidence of the resurrection. God can remove hindrances to His work quickly and powerfully. The enemy of God plotted to conceal the truth, but they could not conceal the truth.

CORAM DEO

If you are a believer, you probably understand the role of faith in your salvation. But do you understand its role in your day-to-day life? In what ways do you trust God? And does your faith rest on His promises to you in His Word? Study the verses below today and prayerfully consider how you can better take God at His word.

*For further study: **Isaiah 26:3 • Matthew 6:33 • Romans 8:28 • Philippians 4:19 • 2 Peter 1:10***

Doctrine in Capsule

“Is the resurrection of Jesus Christ true?”

Scripture presents conclusive evidence that Jesus Christ was in fact resurrected from the dead. Christ’s resurrection is recorded in **Matthew 28:1-20**; **Mark 16:1-20**; **Luke 24:1-53**; and **John 20:1-21:25**. The resurrected Christ also appeared in the Book of Acts (**Acts 1:1-11**). From these passages you can gain several “**proofs**” of Christ’s resurrection. **First** is the dramatic change in the disciples. They went from a group of men frightened and in hiding to strong, courageous witnesses sharing the gospel throughout the world. What else could explain this dramatic change other than the risen Christ appearing to them?

Second is the life of the apostle Paul. What changed him from being a persecutor of the church into an apostle for the church? It was when the risen Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus (**Acts 9:1-6**). A **third** convincing proof is the empty tomb. If Christ were not raised, then where is His body? The disciples and others saw the tomb where He was buried. When they returned, His body was not there. Angels declared that He had been raised from the dead as He had promised (**Matthew 28:5-7**). **Fourth**, additional evidence of His

resurrection is the many people He appeared to ([Matthew 28:5; 9, 16-17](#)[Mark 16:9; Luke 24:13-35; John 20:19; 24, 26-29; 21:1-14](#)[Acts 1:6-8; 1 Corinthians 15:5-7](#)).

Another proof of the resurrection of Jesus is the great amount of weight the apostles gave to Jesus' resurrection. A key passage on Christ's resurrection is [1 Corinthians 15](#). In this chapter, the apostle Paul explains why it is crucial to understand and believe in Christ's resurrection. The resurrection is important for the following reasons: **1)** If Christ was not raised from the dead, believers will not be either ([1 Corinthians 15:12-15](#)). **2)** If Christ was not raised from the dead, His sacrifice for sin was not sufficient ([1 Corinthians 15:16-19](#)). Jesus' resurrection proved that His death was accepted by God as the atonement for our sins. If He had simply died and stayed dead, that would indicate His sacrifice was not sufficient. As a result, believers would not be forgiven for their sins, and they would remain dead after they die ([1 Corinthians 15:16-19](#)). There would be no such thing as eternal life ([John 3:16](#)). **“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep”** ([1 Corinthians 15:20](#) NAS).

Finally, Scripture is clear that all those who believe in Jesus Christ will be raised to eternal life just as He was ([1 Corinthians 15:20-23](#)). [First Corinthians 15](#) goes on to describe how Christ's resurrection proves His victory over sin and provides us the power to live victoriously over sin ([1 Corinthians 15:24-34](#)). It describes the glorious nature of the resurrection body we will receive ([1 Corinthians 15:35-49](#)). It proclaims that, as a result of Christ's resurrection, all who believe in Him have ultimate victory over death ([1 Corinthians 15:50-58](#)).

What a glorious truth the resurrection of Christ is! **“Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain”** ([1 Corinthians 15:58](#)). According to the Bible, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is most definitely true. The Bible records Christ's resurrection, records that it was witnessed by over 400 people, and proceeds to build crucial Christian doctrine on the historical fact of Jesus' resurrection.



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THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

Without question, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the central tenets of the Christian faith. And for all practical purposes, the Christian faith would be meaningless and irrelevant apart from the resurrection of Christ. [The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology](#) states:

“It is the witness of the New Testament that the resurrection of Jesus is the pivotal point of Christian theology and apologetics.”

“The earliest postapostolic writings held this same message of the centrality of Jesus' resurrection. For example, Clement of Rome asserts that this event both demonstrates the truthfulness of Christ's message and is an example of the believer's resurrection. Ignatius insists on the literal facticity of this occurrence as an event in time which is the believer's hope and an example of our resurrection.”

“Willi Marxsen asserts that it (the resurrection) is still the decisive issue in Christian theology today; to have uncertainty concerning this claim is to jeopardize all of Christianity. Gunther Bornkamm agrees that without the message of Jesus' resurrection there would be no church, no New Testament, and no Christian faith even to this day. Jurgen

Moltmann clearly states that Christianity either stands or fall with Jesus' resurrection."

For many people, the resurrection is difficult to accept simply because it falls far outside of what they perceive to be the fundamental laws of nature. Liberal theologians like **Soren Kierkegaard** and **Karl Barth** erroneously concluded that even though the resurrection could be accepted "by faith" as a literal event, that in reality it could not be substantiated by any reliable and trustworthy historical or empirical investigation. If those presuppositions and assumptions are the parameters used to validate the truthfulness of Scripture, then for all intents and purposes their argument could be used against any historical event of either the Old Testament or the New Testament. In fact, all of history, whether biblical or secular, could be contested simply because it is developed on the testimony of eyewitnesses who wrote concerning the eras in which they lived. And so from that scholastically illogical approach, it could be argued that no historical content has any validity.

The technical term for this kind of disjointed approach to history is called "**historical relativism.**" It is simply the notion that an accurate knowledge of the past is not actually possible because every historian writes from a personal bias and a personal agenda. Therefore the "**certainty**" of past events is always subject to to some degree of distortion. **Josh McDowell** in his book [Evidence For The Resurrection](#) provides the four major assumptions that are used by historical relativists to secure their position:

We cannot know historical facts because they cannot be directly observed.

We cannot know historical facts because there is bias or subjectivism on the part of the person who wrote the original account.

We cannot know historical facts because historians are naturally conditioned by the culture in which they live.

We cannot know historical facts because historical accounts are based on fragmentary evidence and selective facts.

What this kind of approach inadvertently says is that it is not actually possible to know anything about the past, and if you do come to some conclusion relative to history, in all likelihood it cannot be

trusted. Just the simple reasoning that if something is historical it is not verifiable seems somewhat overly subjective and most unreasonable. It is the position of the historical relativist that actually undermines the authenticity of credible historical data. If God is God, which He certainly is, then His ability to authenticate history is never in question. The evidence for the resurrection of Christ is in fact overwhelming and has been more than validated for the past 2000 years.

In reality, however, what actually makes the resurrection so unacceptable and objectionable for liberal theologians is simply the fact that the supernatural work of God is involved. The paradigm is that liberal theologians are willing to readily accept the content of secular history without argument, but then reject the content of biblical history as being both mythological and irrelevant. Their propensity to such adulterated intellectualism and debased theological examination is at best remarkably crude and scholastically deceptive.

The authenticity of the resurrection has been historically derived from the known facts surrounding that event and admitted to be historical by virtually all critical scholars who have closely examined the subject. It can be accurately stated that no historical study can ascertain and establish every minute detail of any single event. But the reliability of credible historical information can certainly be sufficient to authenticate the historical probability of any event. All of history is built on that scholastic premise. The apologetics for the resurrection are far superior to the scholastic speculation purported by skeptic and cynical theologians. The reality of a living God who supernaturally and sovereignly controls His divine redemptive plans is a far superior position than the erroneous speculations of those who have tried to discredit the reality of God's divine and eternal outworkings at the cross and the resurrection. **R.A. Torrey**, who certainly defended the historicity of the resurrection of Christ, wrote the following in his book [The Fundamentals](#):

"The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the cornerstone of Christian doctrine. The crucifixion loses its meaning without the resurrection. Without the resurrection, the death of Christ was only the heroic death of a noble martyr. With the resurrection, it is the atoning death of the Son of God. It shows that death to be of sufficient value to cover all our sins, for it was the sacrifice of the Son of God."

Torrey insisted that the entire supernatural or miraculous nature of Christianity stood or fell on the reality of the resurrection of Christ. He further wrote:

“If the Scriptural assertions of Christ’s resurrection can be established as historic certainties, the claims and doctrines of Christianity rest upon an impregnable foundation. On the other hand, if the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead cannot be established, Christianity must go.”

The Christian faith literally stands or collapses on the reality of these events. [Matthew 28](#) climaxes the amazing story of the life of Christ, and the resurrection is the climax of the central salvific events of God’s redemptive history. The resurrection is the foundational truth for everything that Christians believe. Notice what Paul said in [I Corinthians 15:13-19](#),

¹³But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁴And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. ¹⁵Yes, 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. ¹⁶For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁷And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! ¹⁸Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

The issue here is really quite simple – the Christian faith is futile and purposeless if Christ did not rise from the dead. It has no meaning or significance apart from the resurrection.

The great tragedy related to the resurrection is that men throughout the ages have denied, mocked, and despised its reality and dismissed the resurrection as the mere product of the disciple’s overactive imagination. Critics have developed elaborate and convoluted theories to disprove the resurrection, but sadly in that process they are erroneously explaining away the only hope that they have for salvation. One such critic in the modern era was **Hermann Samuel Reimarus**. He contended that the disciples had always been power hungry and greedy men that did not

want the death of Christ to substantially interfere with their plans for self-gratifying fame. **Gregg R. Allison** in his scholarly work entitled [Historical Theology](#) wrote this regarding how **Reimarus** characterized the alleged egocentric outlook of the apostles:

“We see how impossible it is that the apostles could have had any other object in promulgating a new doctrine than their old one, namely, that of ultimately obtaining power and worldly advantage. For an intentional, deliberate fabrication of a false occurrence can only spring from a preconceived resolve and from an object or motive harbored in the mind.”

His contention was that the disciples actually stole the body and then returned to the tomb and acted as if they were in utter astonishment. He tried to substantiate his view by stating Jesus only appeared to the disciples – which would have confirmed his view that no one actually saw Jesus other than those who were fabricating the resurrection hoax. **Albert Schweitzer** praised **Reimarus** as having triumphed with *“the most splendid achievement in the whole course of the historical investigation of the life of Jesus”*.

Gregg R. Allison stated that *“Rudolph Bultmann began his [Theology of the New Testament](#) with the assertion, ‘The message of Jesus is a presupposition for the theology of the New Testament rather than a part of the theology itself’”*. For **Bultmann**, the historic risen Christ was no more than a mere myth fabricated by the disciples and therefore his conclusion was that *“the resurrection, of course, simply cannot be a visible fact in the realm of human history”*. The arguments and contentions against the physical resurrection of Christ are endless, and in all honesty, they simply are the by-products of a self-inflicted cynicism that ignores the substantiated and confirmed realities of historical events. Christian apologist **Josh McDowell** in his best-selling book entitled [Evidence That Demands A Verdict](#) provides an excellent defense of the resurrection and academically refutes the elaborate theories presented to repudiate and discredit the resurrection.

The early church fathers certainly attested to a foundational belief in the resurrection. **Cyprian** affirmed the following about Christ when he wrote these words, *“On the third day, He freely rose again from the dead. He appeared to His disciples as he had been. He presented Himself for recognition by those who*

saw and associated with Him. Being evident by the nature of his bodily existence, he delayed for forty days so they might be instructed by him in the precepts of life and might learn what they were to teach. Then, in a cloud spread around Him, He was lifted up into heaven, that as a conqueror He might bring to the Father, man whom He loved, whom He put on, and whom He shielded from death.”

The early **Nicene Creed** summarized what the early church believed relative to the resurrection when it stated,

“I believe that He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according the Scriptures, and He ascended into heaven and sat at the right hand of the Father.”

All of the major fundamental creeds of the church throughout history have attested to reality of the resurrected Christ. It would have been impossible for the writers of the gospels to have persisted in the truths of the gospels that they narrated if in fact Christ had not risen from the grave. Unfortunately, the truths of Christianity are so very offensive in our culture simply because in a pluralistic society men want to intellectually tolerate and accept everyone and everything but the truth. But the Christian faith is not built on acceptance and toleration, but on historical facts. History fully substantiates the authenticity and credibility of Scripture simply because God the Father has not performed His redemptive work in a spiritual or historical vacuum. **Francis Schaeffer** articulated this so admirably in his apologetic work called [He Is There and He Is Not Silent](#). The bottom line is simply what is declared in [Acts 4:12](#),

¹²**Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”**

What Peter was saying was that the resurrection is that event that separates all of Christianity from every other religion. If the name of Christ is the only name by which someone may be saved, then surely there must be a basis for such a claim. And that basis is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. In reality, the resurrection of Christ is the scriptural truth upon which the eternal destiny of every person actually hinges. It is impossible to

separate Christ as a teacher and miracle worker from Christ as a risen Savior. No matter how someone wants to characterize Christ, they can never end up with just a mere man. It is impossible. He was much more than just mortal, much more than just someone with a few interesting details surrounding His life. From a purely human perspective, His claims were just outrageous. And to make it worse for the skeptic, what He claimed came to pass with the resurrection being the ultimate and final culmination of those claims.

In the gospels, the resurrection was the one event that Christ kept reinforcing to his disbelieving disciples.

[Matthew 16:21](#) declares,

²¹**From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.**

In [Matthew 17:23](#), Jesus said,

²²**Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, ²³and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.” And they were exceedingly sorrowful.**

[Matthew 26:32](#) declares,

³²**But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.**

In [Luke 9:21-22](#), Jesus spoke these words,

²¹**And He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one, ²²saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.”**

[John 21:14](#) says,

¹⁴**This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.**

Throughout all of the New Testament the message of the resurrection was the foundational element of the apostles preaching and teaching. It was the first sermon preached on the day of Pentecost in [Acts 2](#). In [Acts 2:23-24](#) and [Acts 2:32](#) Peter declared,

²³Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; ²⁴whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

³²This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.

In his first sermon on the day of Pentecost, it is notable that Peter said almost nothing about the life and earthly ministry of Christ – nothing significant at all. He mentioned not one word relative to the purity and divineness of His person and His character. He did not mention anything regarding the ethics of Jesus' teachings or even anything in depth about the supernatural elements of miracles and wonders that surrounded His life. The all important factor for Peter was that Christ had been illegally executed, but divinely vindicated by His resurrection from the dead. And it was on that single event that Peter called on Israel to repent of their sins and be baptized in the name of Christ. Even when they were choosing a successor for Judas, [Acts 1:22](#) declared that the one selected had to be a witness of the resurrection.

The resurrection was preached throughout the entire book of Acts. In [Acts 3:14-15](#), Peter declared,

¹⁴But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

[Acts 3:26](#) says,

²⁶To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”

[Acts 4:10](#) declares,

¹⁰let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.

Paul declared the resurrection continually and he

shamelessly based his entire life on the words he penned in [I Corinthians 15:3-4](#),

³For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

[Romans 4:23-25](#) declares that the resurrection of Christ ensures that we can be justified before God.

²³Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, ²⁴but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

I.e., because of the resurrection the believer has received a divine declaration that he is no longer guilty before God, but has been declared righteous in His sight. The resurrection validated that there is no penalty for sin left to pay. No longer is there any wrath of God to bear. There is no longer any guilt to bear and no condemnation.

[Romans 6:4](#) declares that Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of God the Father and states how the believer's union with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection results in a new quality of life no longer dominated by the power of sin.

⁴Therefore 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.

[Romans 6:9](#) says,

⁹knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him

[Romans 8:11](#) declares,

¹¹But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

The Scriptural references to the resurrection of Christ are endless. In [I Corinthians 15](#), He rose the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. In [II Corinthians 4:14](#) Christ is seen as the One who will resur-

rect the believer. [Philippians 3:10](#) declares that we might know Christ and the very “**power of His resurrection**”. [I Peter 1:3](#) says that we have a “**living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**”. I.e., Peter is linking the resurrection with regeneration.

And in [Revelation 1:17-18](#) John echoes these great words of encouragement when he says,

¹⁷And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

What makes Christianity such an imposing reality is that it is not just some kind of ethical teaching that people embrace. Certainly all of that is inclusive in Scripture, but the reality of the Christian faith is based on the simple fact that the God of the Bible has revealed Himself in a series of redemptive events. And the coming of Christ, His death, and His resurrection were the climax of God’s redemptive program. And everything hinged on the resurrection. The God of the Bible is declared to be a living God over whom death has no power. And He fully proved that with the resurrection of Christ from the dead. As the living God of both history and eternity, He is able to fully transcend all human events and bring from them whatever He pleases. He is the very Lord of life itself. He is the One who gives life.

If someone could actually refute the resurrection, then in essence they could destroy the entire foundation of the Christian faith. But that has never been done in the past two thousand years – and never will be. Why? It is because the resurrection is a historical fact. Jesus was a real person who lived a real life. He did not live in seclusion, but did everything in open view of even his worst enemies. There was nothing to hide. Everything that Christians believe and to which they commit their lives is established on the resurrection of Christ. And even though the foundations of the Christian faith are directly related to the teachings of Christ, His miraculous life, and His atoning death, it is finally and ultimately connected to all of those events culminating in His res-

urrection. And although the disciples and most of Jesus’ followers were desperately slow in believing that He had actually risen from the dead, they were soon overwhelmed by the immensity of its reality.

In the simplest of terms, **John MacArthur** rightly concludes that it is scripturally impossible to be a Christian but not believe in the resurrection. [Romans 10:9-10](#) emphatically declares,

⁹that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

It will not do someone any good to talk about the resurrection if in reality they do not believe that it actually happened. **William Lane Craig** distinguished between the resurrection “event” and the resurrection “cause”. He stated the following:

“The event of the resurrection occurs within human history, but the cause of the resurrection is outside human history.”

The point that **Craig** was making was that the resurrection was an event that could be historically verified. So, what all of the New Testament writers are clearly doing is affirming that the resurrection was an actual historical event. Notice how Peter does this in [Acts 2:22](#),

²²“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know....

When Christ came to the earth, His life was not lived in a kind of spiritual quarantine. There was nothing completed behind closed doors or in the dark. There was no subtle scheming and conspiratorial cunning in his life. There was no mischievous plotting taking place. To the contrary, the life of Christ was a monumental and open testimony to the work of God through Him, and each event attested to the simple fact that He indeed was the Son of God. Every facet of His life was simply a validation of the Word of God. The supernatural element displayed in His life was there to simply authenticate that He was who He claimed to be. Peter’s thundering remarks come in [Acts 2:23-24](#) when he declares,

²³Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; ²⁴whom God raised up, having loosed the

pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

Here was a real man who lived in a real place and who performed real miracles in their very sight, but they took Him and crucified Him. They saw the pain and the torture that He suffered and endured. His was a real death, a real dying – and Peter says “You are the ones who have done this”. This was a historical event – verifiable, confirmable, provable, and certifiable – and you were not only witnesses, but the actual instigators. At this point in the text in [Acts 2](#), Peter has quickly validated without apology that they knew that Christ had been crucified at their hands. But by the same token, and what makes his sermon all that more significant, is that his audience fully understood that Christ had been resurrected as well. If the death of Christ had been the only issue, no one would have responded to Peter’s message. But it was not just the death of Christ that was in view. It was the death of Christ in relation to the resurrection. Notice how they reacted to Peter’s sermon in [Acts 2:37](#),

³⁷Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

Notice that there was no argument on their part relative to the resurrection. Why? It was because they fully understood the reality of what had taken place in the resurrection and the only question they could ask was one of desperation – “**What shall we do?**” These individuals were afraid because they utterly comprehended the reality of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It left them fully exposed, unprotected, and without excuse. Jesus was not only a Savior, but also a judge who would return. Some would be raised to a resurrection of life and others to a resurrection of damnation. Every grave would be opened and brought before the throne of God. [John 5:24-29](#) declares how Jesus had previously communicated this remarkable truth, ²⁴“**Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.**” ²⁵“**Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who**

hear will live. ²⁶“**For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself,**” ²⁷“**and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.**” 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.**”

The ultimate miracle was not that Christ died, but that God raised Him from the dead. And that is what Peter is driving towards – that the resurrection, just like His death and burial, was a verifiable, historical fact. That was his point. This was the sovereign outworking of God the Father relative to salvation. It was predetermined in both the purpose and foreknowledge of God. Nothing could have prevented the resurrection from happening. It was all an integral and essential component of God’s divine plan – and it concluded in the resurrection of Christ.

It is interesting that throughout the New Testament that none of the writers actually defend the reality of the resurrection. To the contrary, they simply attest that it happened. For instance, in [Acts 25](#) and [26](#) Paul was speaking to Festus (who was “**almost persuaded**”) and Paul simply states what took place. He said to Festus that Christ had risen from the dead, and nowhere is it recorded that Festus even argued back with Paul. Paul never tried to philosophically defend the resurrection. Why? It was because it was a historical fact. There were eyewitnesses and the foundational and life sustaining testimony of the newly birthed church. In [I Corinthians 15:3-8](#), Paul declared these words,

³For 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.**”

It was the reality of the resurrection that was the catalyst for the apostles and many believers of the early church to be martyred. They were more than willing to give their lives without flinching because they knew that the resurrection was a historical reality and the foundation of everything that they believed and for which they were willing to die. This is really a monumental hurdle for the theological skeptic. Historically and practically there was a radical and pervasive change that took place in the lives of the disciples. It was not just a simple modification, but an immensely militant transformation of all that they were. The disciples were men who were utterly discouraged and frustrated, but who in just a moment were transformed into men of great confidence and certainty. Something happened that changed their lives in a way that will impact eternity. In reality, it was the resurrection that provided the basis for their ongoing faith and courage in spite of fierce and defiant resistance to the truths of the Christian faith that they professed. **George Eldon Ladd** captured it this way when he said:

“While the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost is pictured as the event that gave birth to the church as a self-conscious fellowship, the transformation of Jesus’ disciples from a terrified, hopeless, disappointed band to the bold preachers of Jesus as Messiah and the agent of salvation was caused by His resurrection from the dead.”

The sheer drama of what was taking place was astonishing. Here was the God-Man of heaven on trial. There were no miracles, no supernatural interventions, no host of heavenly angels descending out of heaven to the rescue. To the contrary, the trial was an utter mockery. In America, some of the trials that we have may last up to a year, and that does not even include the appellate process. It may cost millions of dollars all because we go to boundless extents to protect a person. But here in the New Testament setting of the final moments of the life of Christ, we have the harshest verdict possible for someone who had never committed even one crime. It is important to understand that the law of Israel established very rigid procedures to ensure that false witnesses would suffer harsh consequences if they provided false testimonies. Notice how [Matthew 26:59-61](#) states what actually happened,

⁵⁹Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, ⁶⁰but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward ⁶¹and said, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.’”

Under Jewish law, if someone was found to be a false witness, they would be given the same sentence that would have been given for the other person’s crime. For instance, if someone testified falsely against a person accused of murder, then the false witness could be given the death penalty. And to make the trial of Christ an even greater mockery, tradition had established a safeguard that before the death penalty could be given that a full day of prayer and fasting was to be observed by the council that gave the final verdict. It was a reasonable precaution and a viable safety net to help prevent any measure of injustice in the judicial system. Trials could not be convened at night, and if the trial was in progress when nighttime fell, then the court was to be recessed until the following day.

But in the case of Christ, every code of justice was completely disregarded and therefore was both unjust and illegal by every dogma of law known at that time. And to make the trial even worse, the only charge that could be brought against Christ was the charge of blasphemy – a crime for which the Romans would never have approved the death penalty because it was a purely “religious” issue. [Matthew 26:62-67](#) describes this,

⁶²And the high priest arose and said to Him, “Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?” ⁶³But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, “I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!” ⁶⁴Jesus said to him, “It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.” ⁶⁵Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, “He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy!” ⁶⁶What do you think?” They answered and said, “He is deserving of death.” ⁶⁷Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, ⁶⁸saying,

“Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?”

Even Pilate found no fault in Christ. He wondered in [Matthew 27:23](#) as to what evil He had actually done. But despite his pleading with the Jewish leaders, he eventually consented to presenting Christ for crucifixion. The very Son of God was being taken to a cross for crucifixion. He was being executed by men who openly acknowledged His innocence, while Barabbas, a murderer and a thief, was being released. He was brutally scourged, His face was raw from His beard being plucked out, thorns were piercing His head, and He was beat in the face while blindfolded. He was mocked and spit on and forced to carry a beam weighing nearly two hundred pounds for a distance of almost one mile.

[Isaiah 50:6](#) is vivid in its description of the events,

⁶I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.

And if you add to all of that the simple fact that Christ was the only sinless being who had ever lived, the gross picture of injustice becomes even more deeply graphic. [I Peter 2:22](#) says,

²²“Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth”....

[Hebrews 7:26](#) further iterates this,

²⁶For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens;

Here was someone being treated as if He had committed the most hideous and repugnant of all crimes, whereas in reality He was guilty of nothing. The Romans soldiers thought that He was like every other prisoner that they had crucified – a mere nobody. But [Revelation 5:13](#) gives a picture of who He really was when it says,

¹³And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: “Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!”

And there on Golgotha, the Son of God was nailed to a cross – one nail in each wrist and one nail driven through both feet at one time. The pain was more than excruciating. In fact, the English word for “excruciating” comes from a Latin word meaning “from the cross” or “out of the cross”. There the cross was raised and dropped into a hole. The pain was unbearable. [Psalm 22:14-18](#) most likely refers to this event,

¹⁴I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it has melted within Me. ¹⁵My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. ¹⁶For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; ¹⁷I can count all My bones. They look *and* stare at Me. ¹⁸They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.

The Romans were masters at their trade of crucifixion. It was a means of death that maximized the pain so as to be a constant deterrent to those who may be thinking of breaking Roman law. And to make it worse on the criminal, they were stripped of all of their clothing and left naked and humiliated for all to see as they passed by. Personally, I am amazed at the utter compassion of Christ in the face of such horrifying treatment. In [Luke 23:34](#) He uttered these incredible words when He said,

³⁴Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”

The events at the tomb were just as remarkable. There was an earthquake and an angel descending to roll the stone away. Nature itself was trembling and shuddering at what was taking place. There had already been three hours when the sky at noontime turned completely black. And the poor guards – what could they possibly have done to prevent any of this from taking place? This was God at work in the most remarkable of all divinely initiated acts. The guards simply became as “dead men” at what they were witnessing. In fact, the actual Greek words indicate that they had become so afraid at this event that they became completely traumatized by the very sight of the angel and what had just happened.

To everyone who cared for Christ, this appeared to be the worst of all scenarios. This was a tragedy of im-

mense proportions filled with grief, utter shock, and a sense of hopelessness and despair. But in reality, it was simply the divine prelude to the greatest moment in all of history when God raised His Son from the dead and made a public spectacle of all of the forces of evil and hatred that had placed Him on that cross.

So, what was it that was actually happening at the resurrection? In simple terms, Christ was being put on display that God had fully and irrevocably accepted His sacrifice. And in the process He was proclaiming that death, sin, and the devil had all been defeated. Death is never the end for those who belong to Christ because the resurrection of Christ guarantees our resurrection. This was no cosmic accident, no fortuitous turn of events – not at all. Jesus was not a victim, but the victor. He died willingly and in the process became the very source of salvation for those who actually carried out His gruesome and macabre execution.

In the Atonement, the work of Christ is seen primarily as substitutionary and penal. I.e., our sins were actually punished in both the human nature and divine nature of Jesus Christ. Theologically, this is called the “vicarious atonement”. But the primary work that Christ accomplished in His death, burial, and resurrection was satisfying the just and holy demands of God the Father relative to man’s sin. This work of atoning for our sins is often called the “**passive obedience**” of Christ. God the Father was placing our sins on the God-Man Jesus Christ and in that divine act was exacting a righteous payment for sin. And Jesus was simply doing and acting as the Father wanted Him to do. He was placing His life in complete obedience to the will of the Father. So, the primary work accomplished in His death was that of bearing the punishment of our sins in His divine being.

The magnitude of what was taking place is really much more than the human mind can comprehend. We are talking about a work so profound that it is unfathomable, a work that cannot be placed into some mere human perspective. The magnitude of the need and the greatness of the actual sacrifice to satisfy that need can never be overstated. There were unseen supernatural forces at work. Satan himself was intimately involved in the events. He

was the perpetrator and the culprit behind all that had preceded these events. Everything that he could do, he was doing. At every turn, he was viciously and sadistically attacking Christ. But even though it may not have appeared to be taking place, Christ Himself was defeating Satan at every point in the unseen spiritual battle that surrounded His life. [1 John 3:8](#) says,

8He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

[Colossians 2:13-15](#) says,

13And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

In the resurrection Christ made a public spectacle of Satan and triumphed over Him in ways that cannot be measured. From a purely human perspective, it does not appear that Satan fully understood what was actually transpiring at the cross. For him it appeared to be the ultimate victory, but his greatest shock came when Christ arose from the grave. It was the ultimate and final victory fully secured. **Michael Horton** in his systematic theology book called [The Christian Faith](#) expressed these events as follows:

“Even at the cross, as we have seen, Christ’s royal office is publicly displayed as He triumphs over the powers of this present age. Right where those power can see Him only as rejected, helpless, foolish, and weak, He is in fact accomplishing His most decisive victory over His enemies and ours.”

[Romans 1:4](#) is triumphant when it says this about Christ,

4and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

I.e., it was His resurrection that both established and vindicated that His claims were true and accurate.

It was the resurrection where all of the works of Satan were destroyed and made to be nothing. It was there that he was finally put to an open shame and utterly and completely defeated. And in the defeat of Satan, Christ also defeated death. [Hebrews 2:14-15](#) says,

¹⁴Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

When Satan rebelled against God, he became the head of that realm which is outside of the life of God - the realm of death. When Adam fell, he fell immediately into that realm and into that dominion of Satan which is the realm of death. But Christ, by virtue of His death and resurrection, delivered the believer from that power of death. [I Corinthians 15:54-57](#) says,

⁵⁴So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” ⁵⁵“O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The resurrection of Christ is a testimony to the general resurrection of all people. The believer has been completely liberated from what Scripture calls the “Second Death” or being cast into the Lake of Fire. Every person who has ever lived will participate in one of two resurrections. [Revelation 20:14-15](#) says,

¹⁴Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

The resurrection of Christ was so powerful that it fully ensured that men could be saved. [I Peter 1:3-5](#) declares,

³Blessed 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, ⁴to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

The spiritual power that God has given to the believer to live victoriously in a fallen world is directly related to the resurrection. The same power that God used to raise Christ from the grave is the same power that is at work in the believer’s life today. [Ephesians 1:19-20](#) says,

¹⁹and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

So, what should be our response to all of these things? [Colossians 3:1](#) seems to put it the best when it says,

¹If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

The basic theme of the first half of [Romans 6](#) is that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are not only historical facts and significant doctrines, but they are also personal experiences that we come to share in as well. We were “**baptized into His death**” and now we are raised to walk in “**newness of life**”. These are things that have a present substance to them and are things that the believer is to actually experience. In the spiritual realm, life always follows death. So, the inevitable conclusion is that it was the death of Christ that led to the resurrection of Christ. His death led to His resurrected life. And because we are “**united together**” with Him, it means that we are now free from the tyranny of sin that once controlled our life. His death leads to our life. His dying leads to our living.

[Romans 6:5](#) is the first time that Paul has mentioned that the believer also shares in Christ’s resurrection.

⁵For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

The resurrection of Christ points us to the life of Christ, for it was His resurrection that produced our spiritual life. The words “**united together**” is a phrase that expresses the believer’s spiritual union with Christ and it means “grown together”. It is a word that expresses an intimacy between two things. The main idea is that there is a connection between the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the death and resurrection of His people. If it happened to Him, then it will happen to us. For example, the life or death of a tree necessitates the life or death of its branches.

What Paul is saying is that because we have been united to Christ in His death, we shall also be given His life in our mortal bodies. If this did not happen, then we could never be victorious over sin. But because His resurrection followed His death, then life is the necessary consequence of our dying with Him and our subsequent union with Him. The result is that we will be conformed to Him in a holy life here in a process that takes place over time called sanctification. And we will be conformed to Him in a life of glorious immortality hereafter instantaneously in an event defined as glorification. But it is important to not lose the significance of what is to happen now. We will be raised later, but the emphasis is still the “**newness of life**” that each believer is to experience now. We are able to experience right now the impact of Christ’s death and resurrection. And by virtue of our spiritual union with Him, the transforming power of the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ has become ours now. We are now enabled to walk in His “**newness of life**”— and that we should do.



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The Resurrection

Spring has sprung here in southeastern Tennessee! The life concealed deep within crooked brown branches and cold, wet dirt is bursting forth in a magnificent stratum of green leaves and vivid petals. The beautiful white blossoms of the dogwoods are shouting their legends. Azaleas are blooming in an assortment of intense pink hues. The muddy pastures of winter have given way to plush green fields of ripening hay. Twisted and gnarly grape vines are sprouting buds with a promise of delicious, juicy grapes—and the best thing about grapes to a southern boy is the homemade jelly that will be spread over hot, buttered biscuits! The earth is alive and the birds are singing the same choruses of praise that have been sung for thousands of years. Why, even the sky hovering over this vibrant exhibition appears to be a prettier shade of blue.

Maybe—just maybe—the psalmist wrote the following words in the springtime some three thousand years ago: **“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard”** [Psalm 19:1-3 \(ESV\)](#).

The Bible declares that humans have been created in the image and likeness of an eternal God possessing eternal life (**Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 16:26**). Concerning nature's witness of God's existence the Apostle Paul wrote: **"For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse"** [Romans 1:20 \(ESV\)](#). Therefore, it is logical to expect to find evidence of eternal life within the "invisible attributes and divine nature" of human beings on earth. Life cannot be eternal if it doesn't continue beyond the grave.

Henry Morris reports:

"A common fallacy in the secular street-corner philosophy of the world is that all the different world religions are just different ways of reaching God and getting to heaven. The fact is that each religion has its own distinctive belief about God, creation, and the future life, as well as heaven and how to get there... It is true that all other religions (except doctrinaire atheism) do believe in a future life of some kind, and that fact is also very significant. Most people intuitively realize somehow that this life, so often unfair and seemingly meaningless, cannot possibly be all there is..."

So we have all the different religions, each with its own version of the future life. As noted, many of the religions of Asia such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, with all their internal cults and external offshoots, believe in transmigration and reincarnation, a process terminating eventually perhaps in nirvana, a state of universal oneness (or perhaps nothingness). Individual resurrection is never considered even a possibility.

The Chinese religion (before Communism, that is) has been a sort of synthesis of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, with many hold-over elements of a still earlier animism. Confucianism is primarily an ethical system, though with occasional overtones of belief in a high God back in the beginning. Buddhism in its original form was also mainly ethical and meditational. Taoism was more mystical. Again, however, in none of these religions has there ever been any notion of resurrection.

The various forms of animism, whether ancient or modern, seem often to include the concept of a high God, but one who is very distant and who is involved in individual lives mainly through a host of lesser "gods," usually understood either as benevolent or demonic spirits. This is all quite similar also to the ancient pantheistic/polytheistic religions of Babylonia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, et al. But once again there is never in any of these the promise of individual bodily resurrection. There is commonly a belief in some sort of immortality, but never resurrection. When a loved one dies, his or her family and friends have no hope of ever seeing that one again, except possibly as a disembodied spirit somewhere. [<http://www.icr.org/article/religion-resurrection/>]

Since we all believe that life does continue beyond the grave (except one group of extremists), with what goal shall we study the resurrection? Why does it matter **how** life continues beyond the grave—why can't my **soul** just leave my cold, dead body of sin behind and live on forever in the presence of the Lord (**II Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23**)? How shall we respond to **Dr. Morris'** information? Shall we arm ourselves with apologetic weapons and march off to war with Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc., etc...?

Apologist Josh McDowell observes:

*"For those who know Christ, our motivation in using these lecture notes is to glorify and magnify Jesus Christ—not to win an argument. Evidence is not for proving the Word of God but rather for providing a basis for faith... When I share Christ with someone who has **honest doubts**, I always offer enough apologetics to answer his or her questions, then I turn the conversation back to that person's relationship with Christ. The presentation of evidence (apologetics) should never be used as a substitute for sharing the Word of God" ([Evidence for Christianity](#), 2006, p. xiv).*

Even the soundest of apologetic arguments only seem to provide another platform for the skeptical arguments of the intellectually elite. They yearn for an opportunity to deconstruct and dismiss the eternal truths of Holy Writ. One such elitist, Jeff Lowder, arrives at the following conclusions:

"Both sides in the contemporary debate over the resur-

rection assume that the "material" interpretation of the resurrection is the only possible interpretation of the resurrection. Moreover, most participants avoid the issue of background probability, and make arguments about miracles that presuppose their world view. Finally, there are serious flaws in the arguments advanced by both sides. And even if those flaws were corrected, the arguments would still not constitute a strong apologetic for the resurrection. On the basis of the available evidence (and the arguments I've seen), I conclude that a rational person may accept or reject the resurrection."

http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/jeff_lowder/jesus_resurrection/chap4.html).

It doesn't appear that Mr. Lowder has ever walked through southeast Tennessee in the springtime with his eyes open. Moreover, he firmly declares that he will not believe the resurrection under any circumstances unless he becomes an eyewitness himself.

As Christians we must realize that the Scriptures never make an attempt and are not written to convince **the scoffer** (or skeptic). The natural man is dead in trespasses and sins (**Ephesians 2:1**) and cannot even evaluate the things of the Spirit of God (**I Corinthians 2:14**). He needs life before he can believe—and only the Holy Spirit of God has the power to bring dead men (or anything else) to life (**Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-7**).

So what is the goal of our study of the doctrine of resurrection? My goal in studying is not to present an apologetic treatise on the resurrection. Nor will I attempt to develop a theological masterpiece for your review. I simply want to study and find out how our gracious and kind heavenly Father expects to use this doctrine to give me abundant life that can be shared—not only in the happy hereafter but also for the “nasty” now.

Let us press on to an objective examination of the Scriptural evidence for the doctrine of resurrection. As we observe, we must attempt to climb into the historical scene and sit down with the people written about in their culture in order to gain genuine insight into the dynamics of real life. Can you hear the sounds—see the environment—smell the smells—discern the voices of the PEOPLE God has chosen to represent on the pages of His eternal word? Lord,

why did You record these historical events in the lives of your people? What is it you want me to see? Will You help me to understand because You were there and I wasn't? Why did you do or allow certain things to happen in the lives of your sheep? How will this help me live an abundant and joyful life today? How will this equip me to be a Christ-like shepherd of Your sheep?

The Evidence for Resurrection in the Bible

God's Testimony in Nature

Although the word for resurrection is not used in the Old Testament, the idea is identified and developed. In fact, the first picture we see to illustrate the reality of resurrection is in the book of beginnings, Genesis.

“And God said, ‘Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth,’ And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day” [Genesis 1:11-13 \(ESV\)](#).

Did you notice? What is the purpose of plants and fruits yielding seed according to its kind? It is the generation and perpetuation of life contained within the seed. When the outer covering of the seed decays and disintegrates after burial (planting)—the life of the new plant is birthed, nourished with water, and springs up through the soil. It quickly orients itself toward the sun to receive the light necessary to grow and produce fruit. God created and displayed this process on the third day of the first week on planet earth.

The second picture of life being generated from death in nature occurs in the 17th chapter of Numbers—Aaron's rod that buds. A rebellion is being led by Korah against God's authority over Israel in the leadership of Moses and the priesthood of Aaron. God's wrath breaks out against the leaders of the rebellion and the congregation of people who assemble to reject Moses and Aaron. Approximately 15,000 people die over two days as God pours forth His wrath. It was only after God accepted Aaron's atonement on behalf of the congregation that

He instructed Moses to gather the staffs from the head of each family and write their names on their respective staffs (pieces of a dead tree branch). God quenches their rebellion in His own way.

“On the next day Moses went into the tent of the testimony, and behold, the staff of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds. Then Moses brought out all the staffs from before the LORD to all the people of Israel. And they looked, and each man took his staff. And the LORD said to Moses, “Put back the staff of Aaron before the testimony, to be kept as a sign for the rebels, that you may make an end of their grumblings against me, lest they die.” Thus did Moses; as the LORD commanded him, so he did. And the people of Israel said to Moses, “Behold, we perish, we are undone, we are all undone. Everyone who comes near, who comes near to the tabernacle of the LORD, shall die. Are we all to perish” [Numbers 17:8-13 \(ESV\)](#)?

Warren Wiersbe comments concerning this passage:

“The budding of the rod is a beautiful picture of the Resurrection of Christ. By means of the Resurrection, God has declared that Christ is His Son and the only Priest that God accepts. All other priest-hoods are rejected by God. It matters not how many people are involved, how great their names, or how sincere their work—all other priest-hoods are re-jected. There is One High Priest, one sacrifice, and only one open way to heaven; read Hebrews 10. We have many today like Korah who presume to take over the priesthood, but they have no heavenly au-thority... What the death of nearly 15,000 people could not do, the silent blossoming of a dead stick did accomplish” ([Expository Outlines on the Old Testament](#), 1992, p. 177).

God doesn't stop with the use of vegetation. A third picture appears in the diminutive world of the caterpillar. Its ubiquitous metamorphosis to butterfly bears witness day after day to the reality of resurrec-tion. It needs no human explanation—just observa-tion with Bible in hand [<http://lifecycle.onenessbecomesus.com/>].

The Apostle Paul appeals to the reality observed in

nature in order to instruct those Corinthians—under the influence of Greek philosophers or Jewish Sadduccees—who had some doubts and questions concerning their own resurrection: **“You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as He has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body...so it is with the resurrec-tion of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body”**

[1 Corinthians 15:36-38, 42-44 \(ESV\)](#).

God's Testimony in Trials & Suffering

God presents what must have been an insurmountable problem to Abraham in Genesis 22. God made specific promises to Abraham that could only be fulfilled through his son, Isaac ([Genesis 17:16-21; 18:9-15](#)). God had already “cut a covenant” with Abraham and demonstrated its unconditional and everlasting character by walking through the animal pieces alone in Abra-ham's presence ([Genesis 15](#)). Some 40-50 years later God decides to test Abraham by instructing him to take his beloved son of promise and offer him (kill) as a burnt offering in worship on a mountain in the land of Moriah. This would definitely be considered a trial for Abraham, the friend of God and the father of the faith. Abraham contemplates the command of God overnight. In the morning he gathers Isaac, enough supplies, sad-dles his donkey, and embarks on the journey to the land of Moriah. On the third day of their travels, Abraham lays the wood of the sacrifice on Isaac and carries the knife and the fire as they walk up the mountain together. Isaac asks Abraham **“...where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”** Abraham said, **“God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son”** [Gene-sis 22:7-8 \(ESV\)](#). The book of Hebrews gives us in-sight into Abraham's mind as he prepared to kill his only son of promise: **“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had re-ceived the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back”** [Hebrews 11:17-19 \(ESV\)](#).

Job was a man who lived in the land of Uz. He was **"...blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil"** [Job 1:1 \(ESV\)](#). However, Job wasn't spared the trials and suffering that comes with life in this sinful world. In one day Job loses everything he possessed of value in this world—his livestock, his servants, and his children—except his wife and his life. And he said, **"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."** In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong" [Job 1:21-22 \(ESV\)](#).

Next, Job was afflicted with extreme suffering in his body. And yet, Job would not recant his trust in God. **But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips"** [Job 2:10 \(ESV\)](#). However Job deeply regretted the day that he was born ([Job 3](#)).

Finally, Job was subjected to the mental anguish inflicted by his three self-righteous friends who ultimately informed Job he had brought all this suffering on himself with his own sins. Job spends several conversations defending himself of these reckless charges—and still held on to his faith in God, complaining only that God would not speak to him.

In the midst of extreme suffering Job proclaims his desire to die and acknowledges that God is able to raise him from the dead ([Job 14:13-15](#)). Job—in arguably the oldest book of the Bible—also makes the clearest statement concerning the reality of a personal, bodily resurrection: **"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me"** [Job 19:25-27 \(ESV\)](#).

God's Testimony in Death-- "Resuscitations"

The following examples from Scripture are called resuscitations because each person raised from the dead will ultimately have to die again. Therefore it's not an eternal resurrection, but serves as objec-

tive evidence that God has the power to give life to those who are actually dead.

The first incident occurs in the lives of the widow of Zarephath, her son, Elijah, and God. It should be noted that Zarephath is located in Sidon, and the widow is a Gentile ([Luke 4:25-26](#)). Elijah has prayed for God to withhold the rain and a severe drought has resulted in which food has gotten very scarce in Israel. God sends Elijah the Tishbite to the widow's house—who is about to use what little remaining oil and flour to feed her and her son a "last supper" with the expectation that they both will starve to death. Elijah asks her to use what little she has to make him a cake. The widow reluctantly makes him a cake with her last little bit of oil and flour. Elisha promises her that the oil and flour will not run out until it rains again. Elijah's word proved to be true to the widow as she and her household ate for many days. At the end of that time her little son becomes ill and dies. The widow cries out in anguish and with a sense of bewilderment for the man of God: **"...What have you against me, O man of God?"** ([I Kings 17:18a](#)). Her world has been filled with misery and her mind is racked with guilt and despair as she searches for some sin she has committed that would be considered worthy of death—**"...You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and cause the death of my son"** (v. 18b).

"And he said to her, "Give me your son." And he took him from her arms and carried him up into the upper chamber where he lodged, and laid him on his own bed. And he cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by killing her son?" Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this child's life come into him again." And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper chamber into the house and delivered him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, your son lives" [I Kings 17:19-23 \(ESV\)](#).

The second incident of resuscitation occurs within the boundaries of Israel in a little town called Shunem. There is a woman there who has been kind to Elisha by asking her husband to make a room in their home for him as he travels in his service of God. Elisha asks her

how he can reward her for her kindness and she replied that she was content with where she was and with what she had. Gehazi, Elisha's servant, tells Elisha that she has no son, so Elisha promises her she will conceive and have a son by this time next year. Elisha's word comes true to her, but one day the son experiences some excruciating pain in his head and dies later on the same day in his mother's arms. The Shunammite woman lays the boy on the bed in her home prepared for the man of God and then goes to Elisha and grips his feet—being in bitter distress of mind, body, and soul. Elisha hurriedly makes his way to her house.

When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed. So he went in and shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the LORD. Then he went up and lay on the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands. And as he stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm. Then he got up again and walked once back and forth in the house, and went up and stretched himself upon him. The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. Then he summoned Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite." So he called her. And when she came to him, he said, "Pick up your son." She came and fell at his feet, bowing to the ground. Then she picked up her son and went out" [II Kings 4:32-37 \(ESV\)](#).

The third incident is a rather humorous one in which a dead man being buried is hastily thrown into the grave where Elisha's bones are buried because a marauding band of Moabites was seen in the vicinity. The dead man revived and stood on his feet as soon as he touched the bones of Elisha ([II Kings 13:20-21](#)). The humor comes when one uses a little imagination and "conjures" the image of a man thrown down and left for dead in a grave hurriedly running to catch up with his "friends."

God's Testimony in the Psalms and Prophets

The remaining Scriptural evidence has been recorded in narratives or direct decrees of the Lord. The Psalmist states: **"I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I**

have begotten you" [Psalm 2:7 \(Acts 13:33-34\)](#). And also **"For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption" [Psalm 16:10 \(ESV\)](#).**

The prophets of the Old Testament wrote some inspired words from God down for our thoughtful consideration. Isaiah wrote: **"Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead" [Isaiah 26:19 \(ESV\)](#).**

Ezekiel was instructed to speak to dry bones in the valley of death after God asked him—"Can these bones live?" So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people" [Ezekiel 37:10-13 \(ESV\)](#).

Daniel records these words: **"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" [Daniel 12:2 \(ESV\)](#).**

Hosea writes the inspired words of the Lord: **"Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from Death? O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion is hidden from my eyes" [Hosea 13:14 \(ESV\)](#).**

Jonah serves as a living object lesson as one given up for dead after being "buried" in the "grave" of stormy seas in the Mediterranean. However, he appears alive on dry land three days later: **"And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land" [Jonah 2:10 \(see Matthew 12:40\)](#).**

New Testament Sufferings—"Resuscitations"

Our Lord Jesus Christ didn't walk above or around the suffering, anguish, and pain in His time on earth as a man. He willfully chose to embrace it—not on a Divine level, but on a human level in which He voluntarily sub-

jected Himself to the limitations of being a man: **“...a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief...”** [Isaiah 53:3 \(ESV\)](#); also [Philippians 2:5-8 \(ESV\)](#).

Nevertheless, as God the Father gave Him permission—Jesus raised three human beings from being dead back to life. The first of these was a widow’s only son who had perished in the town of Nain:

Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother” [Luke 7:11-15 \(ESV\)](#).

The second of these “resuscitations” was the only daughter of Jairus, a ruler in a synagogue in Galilee assumed to be near Capernaum:

And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying. As Jesus went, the people pressed around him... While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher anymore." But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well." And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. And all were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, "Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise." And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat” [Luke 8:41-42, 49-55 \(ESV\)](#).

Jesus was momentarily delayed on his path to Jairus’ home, but never distracted or negligent of her precarious condition—or Jairus’ anguish. He never panicked or acted impulsively. He just did what His heavenly Father allowed Him to do in the Father’s timing. He wasn’t too late, or even a little tardy.

The third and final “resuscitation” Jesus performed eclipsed all that had ever been experienced or heard of since the beginning of time. Lazarus, brother of Mary and Martha of Bethany and a very close and intimate friend of Jesus died from an illness. Jesus could have healed him from a distance as He had done before ([Matthew 8:5-13](#)) with others when He first heard that Lazarus was sick. He instead chose to remain where He was for two more days ([John 11:1-6](#)). Scripture seems to imply that He purposely delayed returning when summoned because He loved the family ([John 11:5](#)). The Scripture goes on to record the Apostles’ expectations of death (v. 16) as they traveled back to Bethany, and Martha and Mary’s complaint and extreme grief ([John 11:21, 24, 32](#)). Others simply murmured doubts under their breath and wondered why Jesus could not have prevented the death of a sick man if He had the ability to heal the blind (v. 37). Nevertheless Jesus travels to the tomb and orders the stone to be rolled away—over the objection of Martha who exclaims: **“...Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days”** (v. 39). Our Lord and Christ then thanked His Father for hearing His prayers and for the faith of those able to hear His voice. Then He simply says: **“Lazarus, come out”** (v. 43). And Lazarus comes out—and Jesus said to them: **“Unbind him and let him go”** (v. 44).

God uses the Apostle Peter to raise a woman named Dorcas from the dead in the ninth chapter of the book of Acts. This woman was **“full of good works and acts of charity”** ([Acts 9:36](#)). She also was a maker of fine garments and very generous in the use of her talents. The Scriptures seem to imply that she had a special ministry among the widows of Joppa ([Acts 9:39](#)). Peter came to Joppa after being summoned from Lydda and put everyone outside the room where Dorcas lay dead. He then knelt down, prayed, and said: **“Tabitha, arise”** (v. 40). And she opened her eyes and sat up.

The last “resuscitation” we find in the Scriptures involves the Apostle Paul at Troas. Paul was preaching a long message that lasted until midnight. A young man

named Eutychus, somewhere between seven and 14 years of age, was sitting in the window in the upper room where they were gathered in the presence of many lamps. After falling into a deep sleep, Eutychus fell to his death from the third story window (**Acts 20:8-9**). Paul rushed down to the boy and picked him up in his arms and said **“Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him”** [Acts 20:10 \(ESV\)](#).

The Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus

Matthew 28:1-8; Mark 16:4-8; Luke 24:1-9; John 20:1-10

All four gospels record the fact of Jesus’ resurrection in a paltry 31 total verses. We all know the story and the facts—an innocent and sinless man chose to die voluntarily and vicariously in our place. Jesus said: **“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father”** [John 10:17-18 \(ESV\)](#).

But Jesus wasn’t just an innocent and sinless man—He is the God-Man—the Son of the living God who proved this to be true when He resurrected Him from the dead: **“and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ...”** [Romans 1:4-6 \(ESV\)](#).

Peter, one of those who had received grace and apostleship, preached the message of a crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus every time God gave him the opportunity ([Acts 2:22-24, 32-33; 4:10, 33; 5:28, 30; 10:38-41](#)).

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, preaches the message of Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected as the hope of the promise made by God to Israel’s fathers ([Acts 24:14-15; 26:6-8, 22-23](#)).

Jesus’ Resurrection Produces Hope!

What have we found in our search of the objective evidence in Scripture for the resurrection? **First**,

Adam’s sin initiated the dirge of the death-walk on earth that continues on into the hopelessness of the 21st century

(**I Corinthians 15:21-22**). **Second**, God has exonerated His name and proven to be faithful and true by sending His son Jesus to die and be resurrected on the third day following His death (**I Corinthians 15:15**). **Third**, as surely as all men die because of Adam’s sin, all men who are in Christ shall be made alive (**I Corinthians 15:21-22**). **Fourth**, all men who are made alive in Christ stand in grace and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God (**Romans 5:2**)! But what does hope mean exactly—it seems to be an ambiguous word.

Jay Adams defines Biblical hope to be *“...a confident expectation based upon the recorded promises of the living Creator who sovereignly sustains and guides human affairs to the predetermined ends that He has fore-ordained (A Theology of Christian Counseling, 1979, p. 45).*

Dr. Jerome Groopman reports that experimental psychologist and Professor Richard Davidson understands hope *“...as an emotion made up of two parts: a cognitive part and an affective part. When we hope for something, we employ, to some degree, our cognition, marshaling information and data relevant to a desired future event...But hope also involves what I would call affective forecasting—that is, the comforting, energizing, elevating feeling that you experience when you project in your mind a positive future. This requires the brain to generate a different affective, or feeling, state than the one you are currently in.”* Davidson goes on to explain *“the two components, cognition and feeling, are not separate in the brain but interweave and modify each other.”* *“That is what’s so interesting about hope and other emotions,”* Davidson continued, *“how they can powerfully influence cognition and deliberative thinking. They impact the machinery of perception, the circuits that are used to take in and process data and make decisions (The Anatomy of Hope, 2004, pp. 193-194).”*

At first glance it might seem that Professor Davidson and Jay Adams are saying something completely different. However, they are saying the exact same thing! **First**, let us remember that we have already stated that human beings are created in the image and the likeness of our eternal God. **Second**, humans possess a **body** (material part) and a **soul** (an immaterial part). The soul

is triune and consists of **mind** (cognition, or knowledge), **emotions** (affect), and **will** (volition, or decision making). **Third**, let us go back and superimpose (using parentheses) Jay Adams' definition of hope onto Professor Davidson's *grid*: a confident expectation (*affect, or emotions*)...the recorded promises of the living Creator (*cognition, knowledge, mind*)...who sovereignly sustains and guides human affairs (*will, volition, or decision making*). Therefore God has designed and prepared our brains to be programmed with hope! How do we program our brains with hope?

Programming our Minds with Hope

First, we must implant the word of God into the cognitive memory banks of our minds—this only can be done by reading or listening to the Bible.

“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope”

Romans 15:4 (ESV). There is no substitute for reading, meditating, and memorizing the Scriptures. **“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work”** **II Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV)**. We must also realize that our heavenly Father will augment the academic knowledge we gain from reading the Bible with experiential knowledge (*epignosis*) gained from living and walking with Him in the trials and tribulations of this world. This combined knowledge digs deep into our memory cells and is hard to be dislodged by our enemy. It is also how Biblical hope not only produces a confident expectation in the future life but also a joyous experience in the “nasty” now. **“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship”** **Romans 12:1 (ESV)**.

Second, we must realize that our brains may be programmed with the false hope of this dying world system and gird our minds for battle each day!

“Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” **I Peter 1:13 (ESV)**. As our heav-

enly Father has an experimental program, so does our enemy. We must follow the admonition of Scripture: **“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect”** **Romans 12:2 (ESV)**. John MacArthur notes that *“the verb (be conformed) is passive...indicating that conformation is something we allow to be done to us*. He also notes that *“the verb (be transformed) is also passive...and also means that transformation is something that we allow to be done to us (Romans 9-16, 1994, p. 149)*. So what does it mean? We are not to allow this present world system to control our thinking processes. However, we should allow the Holy Spirit to change the way we think by reading the word of God in order to manifest outwardly what God has worked inwardly in the new life of hope! Since the verb “transformed” is a command—this isn't a suggestion, it's an order from our Lord Jesus!

The Living Experience of Hope

Let us review the record of Abraham with this new knowledge of hope. The father of faith didn't leave his homeland on the power of positive thinking or a wistful yearning for better circumstances. He left in hope. **“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”** **Hebrews 11:1 (ESV)**. John Piper has written about the relationship between hope and faith: *“Sometimes faith and hope are virtual synonyms in Scripture...without this hope for the future, we get discouraged and depressed, and our joy drains away. Hope is absolutely essential to Christian joy (Desiring God, 2003, p. 149).”* Piper's conclusions about faith and hope parallel Professor Davidson's conclusion about cognition and feelings. They both may not be separated but remain interwoven together and modify each other in the souls of men.

God is the author of hope (**Romans 15:13**) and administered His test to Abraham concerning Isaac (**Genesis 22**). Now that we know a little more about the workings of faith and hope—what was God really trying to accomplish with the test He administered to Abraham? Study Abraham's life carefully and you'll find that it was filled with the fear of death, doubts, failures, fights, and struggles—and also God's faithfulness to His promises. God is adjusting Abraham's focus and transforming his hope beyond the world he could see to the world that lay beyond the grave—and Abraham was never the

same after that day! There would be no more lies, no more fear of death, nor more concern for the land toward Egypt. The hope of resurrection equipped Abraham to enjoy his present life with a confident expectation of God's future fulfillment of what He had promised. He learned to rest in the security of God's promise, provision, and protection. **“These are all the years of Abraham's life that he lived, one hundred and seventy-five years. Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and *satisfied with life*; and he was gathered to his people”** [Genesis 25:7-8 \(NASB\)](#).

Abraham isn't the only one God forces to stop and think about the faith. Review the records of God's resuscitations again in combination with Piper's words *“Sometimes faith and hope are virtual synonyms in Scripture...without this hope for the future, we get discouraged and depressed, and our joy drains away. Hope is absolutely essential to Christian joy (Desiring God, 2003, p. 149).”* What is God doing in each of these situations in light of our new knowledge concerning *hope*?

The hope we have in our resurrected Lord Jesus Christ is described as good (**II Thess. 2:16**); blessed (**Titus 2:13**); and alive (**I Peter 1:3**). It isn't the dead hope in the repetitive sacrifices of bulls, goats, and lambs of Judaism. It also is the happy anticipation of eternal life (**Titus 1:2**); the sphere in which we live and the foundation upon which we stand (**Ephesians 1:12**).

Learning to Shepherd with Hope

“If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied” [I Corinthians 15:19 \(ESV\)](#). I will end with some personal comments about God's work of hope in me. I am a Chemist and Pharmacist by education and training. God has called me to be a shepherd of His sheep. I thought for many years that the most important tool in shepherding was knowledge. Now I know that it is hope. The most disappointing thing I experienced in preparation for writing this article is the dearth of information concerning the subject of hope in Systematic Theology textbooks. None existed in any of the five textbooks I searched. How can this be? If we can't write about hope we need to close the doors and go home!

What I have learned personally through this study is

that the sheep must look to the shepherd and see hope first. The fifth chapter of Revelation records that the apostle John lifted his teary eyes in search of hope in the throne room of heaven and he saw the Lamb standing, as though he had been slain. He saw God's provision of hope for the inhabitants of earth.

I've learned that sometimes God's sheep just need a cup of coffee and someone to lend an ear. I want the men, women, boys, and girls I may shepherd to see hope first when they see me—not hope *in* me, but the confident expectation of looking up and seeing the Lamb of God living in me. Here's Hope—Share Jesus today!



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