

The Resurrection of Christ

-82

Luke 23:47-24:12

In Jude 3 it says, "Contend earnestly..." or "fight" "...for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." That faith is not our subjective, personal faith in God but rather the objective truth or doctrine that we as Christians believe and hold. It is the essential truths of the Christian doctrine we are to put our boxing gloves on and fight for. We are not to compromise; we are to be convicted that it's true and take a stand for it.

Three things we need to stand on are the Incarnation of Christ—that God was in Christ and became a man; the Crucifixion of Christ—that Christ was the God-man who died on the Cross to pay the penalty for our sins, the penal, substitutionary death of Christ on the Cross; and the Resurrection of Christ. We take these things for granted, but we need to understand that these doctrines are under attack today.

This is why Paul wrote to Timothy and said, "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come..." and the time has come "...when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables." (2 Timothy 4:2-4).

The doctrine we are going to look at today is the doctrine of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. We read the narrative, the historical account of Jesus' death, and today we will read of His burial and Resurrection from the dead. Praise be to God for that!

"Up from the grave He arose

With a mighty triumph o'er His foes;

He arose a victor from the dark domain,

And He lives forever with His saints to reign.

He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!"

The doctrine of the Resurrection of Christ is essential. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Paul said it was the Gospel. He described it this way: "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." And Paul said, "If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty....If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable." But then Paul went on to say, "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become

the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:14,17-20). So Jesus is the prototype of the dead in Christ. They will be resurrected from the dead, even as Christ was resurrected.

There are two main divisions in our text. The first section is Luke 23:47-56, where we have the burial of Jesus. And the second section is Luke 24:1-12, where we see His Resurrection.

In verse 46, Jesus had died on the Cross. He had uttered the statement, “‘Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ Having said this, He breathed His last.”

Now we have the response of three different individuals or groups. Verse 47, “So when the centurion...” a Roman soldier in charge of 100 men overseeing the Crucifixion “...saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, ‘Certainly this was a righteous Man!’” Centurions in the Bible are presented as being good, honorable men. He saw Him turn to the thief on the cross. He heard what Jesus said. He heard, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34). He had seen Jesus die. He experienced the darkness, the earthquake. He saw all these events and was convinced that Jesus was a righteous Man, the Son of God.

The second group responding to the Cross, in verse 48, was the people, the general populace of Jerusalem that came to watch the Crucifixion. “And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned.” These would be the same people who Peter would preach to on the day of Pentecost, who would be convicted, “cut to the heart” and would come to faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:37). These were the lookie-loos.

The third group, in verse 49, were the acquaintances, people who were sympathetic toward Jesus, believers and followers of Christ. “But all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.”

So we see the centurion, the populace and the acquaintances who stood afar off and watched what was happening.

Now we come to the story of Joseph of Arimathea, verses 50-54. “Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member...” or a member of the Sanhedrin, the high court of the Jewish people “...a good and just man. He had not consented to their...” meaning the Sanhedrin’s “...decision and deed.” Since another account says that the whole Sanhedrin agreed (Matthew 26:59), it is believed that Joseph was not at that meeting that decided to crucify Christ. So he did not consent to their decision or deed.

Verse 51, “He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.” Mark 15:44 says that Pilate was surprised that Jesus was dead already. Pilate then sent soldiers to check it out, and the soldiers broke the legs of the prisoners next to Jesus, because sundown was approaching. Since Jesus was already dead, they didn’t break His legs. Thus Scripture was fulfilled that said, “Not one of His bones shall be broken” (John 19:36 quoting Psalm 34:20). They did thrust a spear into His side, and out came blood and water (John 19:34). So Pilate

eventually gave Joseph the body of Jesus.

Verse 53, “Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before.” John 19:41 says that it was near the place where Jesus was crucified. “That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near.” Joseph of Arimathea would become ceremonial unclean by touching Christ’s body. He sacrificially volunteered to do that in love, because he cared for Jesus. So he would not be able to participate in the Passover that weekend, which was a very important event.

It’s interesting that once Jesus died on the Cross—I’ve always loved this thought—only loving hands touched His body. What the wicked, evil men had done is all over. God provided for Jesus even in His death. The Bible says, “They made His grave...with the rich at His death” (Isaiah 53:9). That certainly was provided by Joseph of Arimathea.

The Bible says that between Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, they had 100 pounds of ointment with which they eventually were going to anoint His body. It was said that only kings or royalty would have their bodies prepared with that much ointment. Such was the case for Jesus the King.

It’s pretty clear here that Jesus died on Friday. He was on the Cross from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. From 3:00 pm to sundown, which was about 6:00 pm, it only allowed a short time to prepare Jesus’ body and lay it in the tomb, because the Sabbath would start and they couldn’t do that on the Sabbath, which was Saturday. Jesus would rise from the grave early Sunday morning, which was the first day of the week.

Thank God for Joseph of Arimathea! When I get to heaven, I think he’ll be there and I’ll want to shake his hand. If it weren’t for Joseph, Jesus’ body would have been thrown in the Valley of Hinnom, which was a trash heap where the fire was burning constantly, and His body would have been consumed by fire. Then we would have never known that He rose from the dead. Jesus was laid in a tomb, so we would know it was empty.

The fact that Jesus physically died, Pilate released the body, Joseph had the body prepared and Joseph buried the body supports the fact that Jesus actually died. He didn’t swoon or pass out. He physically, literally died and was buried. That’s very important to understand.

Verse 55 tells us the women were going home to prepare the spices and oil, with which they would anoint Jesus’s body on Sunday. “And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.”

These women clearly noted where Jesus was buried. I say that because one of the theories in opposition to the Resurrection was that the women went to the wrong tomb when they came to anoint Jesus’ body on the Resurrection morning. They weren’t good with directions and they didn’t have GPS. It was very early and they were tired and upset. On the way they questioned,

“Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?” (Mark 16:3). And when they got there, the stone was already rolled away, and it was dark and early, supporting the theory they had the wrong tomb. Did the apostles get the wrong tomb when they arrived and saw the grave clothes lying there without the body? How about the angels? Did they get the wrong tomb? They would have been hanging out in the wrong tomb. No.

If you buried a loved one on Friday, do you think you would forget on Sunday or Monday where they were buried?! I highly doubt that.

So Jesus Christ died and Jesus Christ was buried.

In Luke 24:1-12, we see the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. “Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.” It’s interesting that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, all four Gospels, tell the story of the Resurrection. They discovered that Jesus had risen, but none of the Gospels describe the actual resurrection. They just declared it; Jesus rose. The grave was empty, so Jesus Christ was risen.

This was the setting on the first day of the week. This is why we Christians worship on Sunday. Does it matter on what day we worship? No; every day is The Lord’s Day. This day was special to the Christians and to the church, because this was the day that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. And there is indication that it was referred to as The Lord’s Day, the day Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

The women had been worried about the stone. They went to the tomb thinking they would figure it out when they got there, but it was already rolled away. This was surprise number one. The disciples were hiding behind locked doors drawing diagrams about how to get the stone rolled away. The women were just getting it done; they were on their way to the tomb. God went ahead of them and provided that the stone was already rolled away. They were so surprised.

Verse 2, “But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.” The order of events in Luke differs somewhat from Matthew, Mark and John. They don’t contradict; they complement each other. You have to piece it all together.

Verse 4, “And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments.” We know these to be angels as stated in verse 23. And the other Gospels refer to them as angels as well. “Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, ‘Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, “The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.”’”

In Luke 9:22 and Luke 18:31-33, Jesus told them He was going to be handed over to wicked men, be crucified and then rise from the dead on the third day. They had heard that but it didn’t

take hold of them; they didn't understand it. Maybe they thought Jesus meant He would spiritually rise, or maybe it just went in one ear and out the other. They didn't comprehend.

Another thing consistent about all those who encountered this first Resurrection Sunday is that they were all bewildered, confused, doubted and weren't sure what was going on, even though Jesus had said to them, in verse 7, "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."

It is an essential doctrine of the church. Jesus Christ died for our sins, He was buried and three days later Jesus rose from the grave. Then verse 8 said, "And they remembered His words." This certainly points out the importance that we need to remember God's Word. What God has spoken cannot be broken. What God says will happen we should take literally, even if we can't understand it or comprehend it. We need to believe the Word of God. We need to think Biblically. Had they believed His word, they would have known Jesus would be crucified and rise from the dead the third day. Then they "remembered His words."

Starting in verse 9, "Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest." So the women were excited and ran back to tell the rest. It seems that Mary Magdalene had stayed at the tomb, because she was the first one to see the risen Christ (John 20:18). "It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles." So they went back and told Peter, James and John, Andrew and all the apostles. "And their words seemed to them..." that is, "the apostles" "...like idle tales, and they did not believe them." The first unbelievers were the believers. If I was Jesus, I'd think, Where did I get these guys?! They didn't believe the words of these women.

Verse 12, "But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened." So the body was gone, but the grave clothes were still there. Peter was scratching his head wondering what happened. The Gospel of John tells us that it was Peter and John who went to the tomb. John says, "The other disciple..." that is, "John" "...outran Peter and came to the tomb first....Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed" (John 20:4,8).

What is found in all the accounts of the Resurrection is that the tomb was empty except for the grave clothes. The body was missing. All of the hopes of humanity are based on the empty tomb, the grave of Jesus Christ.

I want to make it clear that this was not a mystical, spiritual, metaphysical resurrection. Jesus didn't rise in spirit. He didn't rise in His thoughts. He didn't just mystically rise in our hearts. Rather He literally, physically, bodily rose from the dead.

I want to emphasize this, because the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the prototype of all our resurrections. The same body that was crucified and buried came out of the tomb, but it was

now immortal, eternal. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:53-55, "This corruptible..." referring to our bodies "...must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality....Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?'"

So it is essential we not only believe that Jesus rose from the dead but that He literally, physically, bodily rose in a glorified body that He will be in for all eternity. From the moment that Jesus Christ was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, humanity was fused together with deity for all eternity. Right now Jesus is the exalted God-man in heaven.

I want to give you some facts about the physical nature of the Resurrection of Christ. Number one, the tomb was empty; Jesus was gone (Luke 24:3,6,12). Number two, Jesus' resurrected body retained the Crucifixion scars. He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing. And Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!'" (John 20:27). I think Jesus will bear those scars through all eternity.

Number three, Jesus ate food in His resurrected body. "They gave Him a piece of a boiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence" (Luke 24:42-43). And if we're going to have a body like Jesus has, we'll be able to eat in heaven for all eternity. Praise the Lord! And we won't have to worry about gaining weight or getting indigestion. We'll have glorified bodies and we'll be able to eat. What a marvelous thing that will be!

Number four, Jesus' resurrected body was touched by others. He invited them to touch Him. "Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have" (John 24:39).

Number five, Jesus resurrected body was humanly visible with the human eye and heard from (John 20:15-16). "She..." that is, "Mary Magdalene" "...supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, 'Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!'"

So Jesus spoke with others, they heard Him, they saw Him, they touched Him and they ate with Him. They didn't hallucinate Him; it was a genuine resurrection. Jesus came out of the tomb in an eternal, immortal, glorified body.

What does the Resurrection mean to us today? It's impossible for me to exhaust that question, but let me give you eight things that the Resurrection means to us. Number one, as to the Person of Jesus Christ, He is God in the flesh, and everything Jesus said is true, so He can be trusted and believed. If He predicted His own death, burial and Resurrection and it was fulfilled, don't you think we can believe Him when He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6)? I think so. In John 3:3, He said, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Jesus is to be trusted and believed.

I believe the words of Jesus, and Jesus thus becomes the object of our faith. Jesus, and Jesus alone, is the object of our faith. "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of

yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8).

"My faith is built on nothing less

Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;

I dare not trust the sweetest frame,

But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;

All other ground is sinking sand."

Are you trusting Jesus, the risen Savior? The One who came from heaven? The One who died for your sins? The One who was buried and rose again?

This is what sets Christianity apart from all other religions, all other ideologies, all other philosophies. God is an actual person. He is God who became man. He lived a sinless life and died a substitutionary death. He rose from the dead. And it is a fact of history that Jesus conquered death and the grave. So He can be trusted.

Number two, the Resurrection implied His pardon. My sin can be forgiven. Paul said that if Christ is not risen, then we are not forgiven and we're still in our sins. But if Christ is risen, we are forgiven of our sins. The Bible says in Psalm 103:12, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." So you can be forgiven, or pardoned, for your sins, because Christ died and rose from the dead.

Number three, the Resurrection means His power. In Philippians 3:10, Paul said, "...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." It's the power to live a godly life. Jesus lives so He can live in me. He actually comes to live inside me and live through me. The Christian life is not lived in your own strength, in your own power. It is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). You can have power to live a godly life—not in order to be forgiven, but because you are forgiven.

Number four means its presence. It means that God is with me in the Person of His Son. Jesus comes to us and abides with us. Jesus said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). Isn't that a precious promise? If Jesus hadn't risen from the dead, it would mean nothing. You're never alone; Jesus is always with you. I like Psalm 23:4 where David said, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me."

I don't want to face death without Jesus. Do you? I don't want to die without Jesus. I want to know that He is with me. I want to know that He's going to strengthen me. I want to know that He's going to help me. I want to know that He'll never leave me. I want to know He'll never forsake me. He said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

Number five, the Resurrection means its purpose. Life without God is vain or empty. Paul said, in 1 Corinthians 15:19, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable." If there is no hope beyond the grave and we have only what is here, we are "most pitiable." But Jesus brings purpose and meaning to life.

There are a lot of miserable people in the world today. Because they are without Christ. They are without God. They are without hope. Every time I watch the news I say, "They need God. They need to get saved. They need Jesus." Jesus is the answer. The world needs Jesus.

Number six, because Jesus rose, we have His promise. Jesus said in the upper room, in John 14:1-3, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me." There is that faith in Christ. "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

Forget that promise if Jesus did not rise from the dead; He wouldn't be coming back. I believe He is coming back. Do you? I believe He rose from the dead and is preparing a place for me. It's a real place and it's a nice place. It'll be His Father's house, and we'll be forever with the Lord.

Number seven, because Jesus rose from the dead, we have His pattern. As I have said, in 1 Corinthians 15:20, "Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." The "firstfruits" pertains to when they would reap the fields at harvest time. The first portion of the field they reaped was given to God. It was a foretaste of what was to follow; it was a down payment. Jesus is the first in a long line of people who will be physically, actually, literally raised from the dead. That will not only be the righteous raised to eternal life, but also the wicked and unrighteous will be raised to eternal judgment and damnation. So Jesus is the pattern. Just as He rose in a glorified, eternal body, so will I.

Number eight, we have His punishment. This is a negative thought but it's true. Because Jesus rose from the dead, even wicked unbelievers, unsaved people will be resurrected. It's called the resurrection of the just and the unjust. There is just one, big resurrection. There is the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the unrighteous. At the end of the millennium, the 1,000-year reign of Christ, all the wicked dead from all of human history will be resurrected, stand before Jesus Christ as He sits on a great, white throne. The books of life will be opened, their names will not be written in the book, so they will be cast into the fire of Gehenna. This is the second death. Jesus said it is a place where "their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:48).

We get all excited about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ—and rightfully so—but if you are wicked, a sinner, not regenerated, you're not a Christian and running from God, it's a frightening thought. You're going to stand before Him some day. You're going to give an account of your life. The books will be opened. Will your name be found in the book? Not everyone who comes before the great, white-throne judgment of Christ will find their name in the Book of Life.

You ask, "How do I get my name in the Book of Life?" By repenting and believing in Jesus Christ, by receiving Him as your Lord and Savior, by trusting in Him, by putting your faith in Him. By simply coming to Jesus and saying, "Lord, I believe You came from heaven, I believe You died for me on the Cross, I believe You rose from the dead, and I ask You to forgive my sins, come into my heart and be my Lord and Savior. I surrender my life to You." Then you won't be standing before the great, white throne in judgment. But if you reject Jesus Christ, You will stand before Him and be judged for your sins.

In Acts 17:31, Paul said these words, when he preached to the Athenians on Mars Hill: "...because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained, He has given assurance of this, to all by raising Him from the dead." Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. God was giving us assurance that He would judge the world. He's coming back as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19:16). And the Bible says, "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11).