

The Resurrection of Christ

Valleys Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 31st March 2013

Intro

- The resurrection of Jesus is unique- it sets Christianity above all the religions of the world. Josh McDowell, 'Evidence that demands a verdict' says:

"All but four of the major world religions are based on mere philosophical propositions. Of the four that are based on personalities rather than a philosophical system, only Christianity claims an empty tomb for its founder.

- Abraham, the founder of Judaism, died about 1900 BC but no resurrection was ever claimed for him.
- The original accounts of Buddha never ascribe to him any such thing as resurrection; in fact, in the earliest accounts of his death, we read that when Buddha died it was "with that utter passing away in which nothing whatever remains behind."
- There is no trace in the Pali scriptures or commentaries of Sakya Muni having existed after his death or appearing to his disciples.
- Mohammed died, June 8th 632 A.D. at the age of 61, in the city of Medina where his tomb is visited annually by thousands of devout Muslims. All the millions of Jews, Muslims and Buddhists agree that their founders have never come up out of the dust of the earth in resurrection."

Rd 1Cor 15:1-28

The importance of Facts- v2 'you are saved if you hold fast that word I preached'

- What we believe in MUST be true to be effective.
Not like people who believe WWF wrestling is real. Or people who believe evil soap characters are same in real life.
- Truth is not relative. All roads don't lead to God, just as not all numbers on our phone get to our house landline. Jesus Way Truth Life none come to Father except through Him.
- We only have life by believing the truth- Paul here reminds them of the importance of believing in the fundamental truths of the gospel. V1 'Moreover' – i.e. More important than gifts is making sure the foundations are good- keep holding fast to the gospel.
- Feelings and experiences are great, but not if they override truth. FACT-FAITH-FEELINGS is the right order for this train. Sometimes Christians have so elevated experiences they have allowed major doctrinal errors to slip in unchecked- this is why Paul insists on going over the basics again.
- Universalism is a lie- Paul makes it clear here we are saved by holding onto the truth of the gospel. V22 is currently being misquoted by some to mean that God will save everyone 'all' but this verse is saying that we need to be 'in Christ' and in order to be 'in Christ' we need to hold on to the truth of the gospel.
- Paul talks about being saved in verse 2. Saved from what? Saved from the condemning judgement of God upon your sin- this is what Hell is- God punishing sin. Although Hell has become unpopular today (not that it ever was) it is still true and people are still going there. It is by believing the good news and turning to God in repentance that we are saved, and Paul here reminds the Corinthians of this fact by using the word 'saved'. Some have complained that hell isn't a biblical word, but I don't see that 'Lake of fire' or 'second death' are much more appealing as a place I would want to go to. It was never God's intention that man should go there, it was prepared for the devil and his angels, but without responding to God's salvation that is our end destination. Jesus experienced God's wrath against our sin when He did on the cross. To try to lessen God's judgement against sin is to try to cheapen the price Jesus paid to save us.
- Are you saved? Do you have an assurance of salvation? Would you go to Heaven if

you died tonight? By believing the truth of the good news of Jesus you can have that assurance today.

What then are the facts?

Paul keeps repeating 'according to the scriptures'- the Bible gives us the important facts we need for life

- **Jesus died- v3.** He didn't just appear to die as some skeptics might argue.

Crucifixion: Jesus Faced a Horrible Death

Crucifixion sometimes began with a scourging or flogging of the victim's back. The Romans used a whip called a flagrum, which consisted of small pieces of bone and metal attached to a number of leather strands. The number of blows given to Jesus is not recorded; however, the number of blows in Jewish law was 39 (one less than the 40 called for in the Torah, to prevent a counting error). During the scourging, the skin was ripped from the back, exposing a bloody mass of tissue and bone. Extreme blood loss occurred, often causing death, or at least unconsciousness. In addition to the flogging, Jesus faced severe beating and torment by the Roman soldiers, including the plucking of His beard and the piercing of His scalp with a crown of thorns.

After the flogging, the victim was often forced to carry his own crossbar, or patibulum, to the execution site. The patibulum could easily weigh 100 pounds. In the case of Jesus, the record shows that He may have carried His patibulum the distance of over two football fields. In a weak and tormented state, it's no wonder the record establishes that Jesus needed a great deal of assistance. Once the victim arrived at the execution site, the patibulum was put on the ground and the victim was forced to lie upon it. Spikes about 7 inches long and 3/8 of an inch in diameter were driven into the wrists. The spikes would hit the area of the median nerve, causing shocks of pain up the arms to the shoulders and neck. Already standing at the crucifixion site would be the 7-foot-tall post, called a stipes. In the center of the stipes was a crude seat to "support" for the victim. The patibulum was then lifted on to the stipes, and the victim's body was awkwardly turned on the seat so that the feet could be nailed to the stipes. At this point, there was tremendous strain put on the wrists, arms and shoulders, resulting in a dislocation of the shoulder and elbow joints. The position of the nailed body held the victim's rib cage in a fixed position, which made it extremely difficult to exhale, and impossible to take a full breath. Having suffered from the scourging, the beatings and the walk with the patibulum, Jesus was described as extremely weak and dehydrated. He was probably losing significant amounts of blood. As time passed, the loss of blood and lack of oxygen would cause severe cramps, spasmodic contractions and probably unconsciousness.

Ultimately, the mechanism of death in crucifixion was suffocation. To breathe, the victim was forced to push up on his feet to allow for inflation of the lungs. As the body weakened and pain in the feet and legs became unbearable, the victim was forced to trade breathing for pain and exhaustion. Eventually, the victim would succumb in this way, becoming utterly exhausted or lapsing into unconsciousness so that he could no longer lift his body off the stipes and inflate his lungs. Due to the shallow breathing, the victim's lungs would begin to collapse in areas, probably causing hypoxia. Due to the loss of blood from the scourging, the victim probably formed a respiratory acidosis, resulting in an increased strain on the heart, which beats faster to compensate. Fluid would also build up in the lungs. Under the stress of hypoxia and acidosis, the heart would eventually fail. There are several different theories on the actual cause of death for Jesus. One theory is that there was a filling of the pericardium with fluid, which put a fatal strain on the ability of His heart to pump blood. Another theory states that Jesus died of cardiac rupture. Another theory is that Jesus' death was "multifactorial and related primarily to hypovolemic shock, exhaustion asphyxia and perhaps acute heart failure." Regardless of the actual medical cause of final death, the historical record is very clear -- Jesus suffered numerous hours of horrible and sustained torture on the cross of Calvary. (source: <http://www.allaboutjesuschrist.org>)

- **Breaking leg bones speeded up death** as the victim could not push up anymore to inhale. Jesus was already dead when they came to Him. A spear in the side proved this- blood and water came out- a sign of death- clot separates from serum.
- **Jesus died for our sin -v3.** There was a reason Jesus suffered and died- Isaiah 53 tell us the reason- it was for our iniquities- i.e. He was punished in our place so that we could go free. He is our substitute. Why? Simply because He loves us and knew it was the only way our sins could be taken away for us to get to Heaven. There is no sin too bad to be cleansed if we come earnestly in repentance. Do you have an assurance all your sins are forgiven? Come to Christ in faith and humility and receive that assurance today.
- **Jesus was buried- v4.** Laid in a rich man's tomb (predicted Is 53:9). Joseph of Arimathea provided the tomb, a Sanhedrin member and a secret follower of Jesus. Body wrapped in linen cloths, anointed with oils which would set like a cast on a broken limb.
- Massive stone rolled over entrance to tomb. Couldn't move it from inside even if tried- probably in a groove and needed to push from one side. Women knew it

weighed tons and wondered who would move it for them (maybe afraid to ask the guards).

- Guards posted 24-hr duty to guard the tomb 7 seal placed over the stone to prevent any tampering. Even if Jesus had not have died first he would have needed to be a bit more than a Houdini to get out of this one. A rescue attempt also seems unlikely as the male disciples had fled for fear of the authorities.
- Yet empty tomb! All authorities needed to do to stop Christianity from spreading was produce the body, but they could not.
- Rose again on the third day-v4. Sunday became the new day of worship for the believing Jews- this is an amazing testimony that something radical had taken place! Three days and three nights is a Hebraism (e.g. flood 40 days and nights etc.) meaning 3 days, and it can be part of a day- eg. 3pm Friday to Sunday morning.
- The truth of the witnesses of the resurrection- Paul gives an ordered streamlined list of witnesses to the resurrection rather than every single appearance of Christ. The gospels reveal that Peter was probably the 4th to witness Christ risen:

1. Mary Magdalene (7demons), shortly after his resurrection. (Mark 16:9; John 20:11-18.)

2. The women returning from the empty tomb. (Matthew 28:8-10.)

3. Two disciples on the road to Emmaus. (Mark 16:12,13; Luke 24:13-35.)

4. Peter. (Luke 24:34, 1 Corinthians 15:5.)

5. His disciples, in Jerusalem-Thomas is absent. (Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23.)

6. His disciples, in Jerusalem-Thomas is present. (John 20:24-29.)

7. His disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. (Matthew 28:16; John 21:1,2.)

8. **500** believers at one time. (1 Corinthians 15:6.)

9. James. **His brother, and author of the book of James, who was formerly an unbeliever.** (1 Corinthians 15:7).

10. His disciples on a mountain in Galilee. (Matthew 28:16-20.)

11. His disciples, blesses them, and ascends into heaven. (Luke 24:50-53.)

12. Paul, on the road to Damascus. **Who formerly was an unbeliever and persecuted the Church, but became a great witness for Christ and wrote many letters in scripture.** (Acts 9:3-6; 1 Corinthians 15:8.)

- Of note are the hostile witnesses- James and Paul.
- Most of the disciples died as martyrs for witnessing to the resurrection- why would someone be prepared to die for a lie?

Charles Colson served as special counsel to President Richard Nixon. He was also a co-conspirator in the infamous Watergate cover-up. As a result, Colson pleaded guilty to the crime of obstruction of justice and did time in a federal prison. With the Watergate scandal unfolding, Colson began a soul quest that concluded with a commitment to Jesus Christ. Later, as he began to ponder one of the fundamentals of the Christian faith -- the resurrection -- Colson found his conspiracy experience to be most enlightening. Reflecting on the Watergate scandal Colson writes: With the most powerful office in the world at stake, a small band of hand-picked loyalists, no more than ten of us, could not hold a conspiracy together more than two weeks.... Yet even the prospect of jeopardizing the President we'd worked so hard to elect, of losing the prestige, power, and personal luxury of our offices was not enough incentive to make this group of men contain a lie. Nor, as I reflect today, was the pressure really all that great.... There was certain to be keen embarrassment; at the worst, some might go to prison; though that possibility was by no means certain. But no one was in grave danger; no one's life was at stake.... This is why the Watergate experience is so instructive for me. If John Dean and the rest of us were so panic stricken, not by the prospect of beatings and execution, but by political disgrace and a possible prison term, one can only speculate about the emotions of the disciples. Unlike men in the White House, the disciples were powerless people, abandoned by their leader, homeless in a conquered land. Yet they clung tenaciously to their enormously offensive story that their leader had risen from his ignoble death and was alive -- and was the Lord.... Take it from one who was inside the Watergate web, who saw firsthand how vulnerable a cover-up is: Nothing less than a witness as awesome as the resurrected Christ could have caused those men to maintain to their dying whispers that Jesus is alive and the Lord.

- Jesus appeared over a 40 day period, and on many occasions. Ate with them, cooked breakfast.

- Over 500 at one time refutes theory that they hallucinated.

The Importance of the Resurrection-v14 'if Christ is not risen our preaching and your faith is empty'

- Paul then outlines the importance of the resurrection-
- V14 'If Christ is not risen.. our preaching is empty'- i.e. not true, but as Christ is risen it vindicates the truth of the gospel, it confirms all of Christ's teaching (particularly His claims to be God). It elevates Christianity above all other faith systems as no other religion has a founder who beat death. Paul later speaks of the futility of being baptised into someone who is dead- v29 i.e. Why identify with someone's teaching and lifestyle (baptism was all to do with identification) if that person is now dead? Paul had said previously that the Jewish Fathers were baptised into Moses (1Cor 10:2) and that Christians were baptised by one spirit into one body (Christ- see 1Cor 12:13), people were also baptised under John to signify their identification with John's message of repentance prior to receiving Christ's teaching. What would be the point of it if Moses was now dead or if John was now dead or Christ was now dead? If so, we might as well forget their teaching as it has not led to life. However, both Moses ('God shall raise up a prophet like me from among your own people- you must listen to Him') and John ('behold the lamb of God') pointed people to Christ as the only way to life.
- V 17 'still in your sins' -It proves our sins have been taken away by Christ's sacrifice- i.e. God the Father has accepted Christ's sacrifice on our behalf- otherwise how would we know if the sacrifice of Christ has been enough for us? It would be unjust for Jesus to have to die again- He has FULLY paid for your sins and the resurrection is God the Father's acceptance of it on your behalf! This is **good news!** Christ was handed over to death to deal with our sins and raised in order to effect our justification. (Rom 4:25)
- It guarantees our resurrection-
He is the firstfruits v20. Firstfruits means there are more of the same to come!

1Cor 6:14 And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. (Rom 8:11)

Firstfruits commanded in Lev 23:9-14 & Num 28:26-31. When they came into Israel & had their own fields they were to take the first part of the harvest (marked start of the 2 month spring harvest). Grain taken from the harvest and 5.1 pints of grain ground and offered at the temple to God. More significantly the priest was to take a sheaf of the grain and wave it before God in the temple. This was to be done on the day after the Sabbath of the passover. Therefore if the passover was on a Monday it would be nearly a week later on the Sunday. However, if passover happened on a Friday, then it would be presented to God on the third day. It just so happened that Jesus died on the passover to fulfill it, actually on a Friday, so that when Jesus rose from the dead He also fulfilled the firstfruit feast, literally on the same day (the Sunday after the Sabbath- i.e. The 3rd day after the passover). Difference between the other resurrections in scripture by Jesus (e.g Lazarus), and that happen now- Jesus first to get His NEW body never to die again!

- It means we have resurrection power in us
' I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. ' - (Eph 1:18-23)
- Rom 8- Law of spirit of life sets us free from law of sin and death- the Holy Spirit in

us empowers us to obey God. Sanctification. Gal 5- the fruit of the Spirit.

- Jesus took the penalty of sin on the cross and demonstrated power over sin on our behalf by rising from the dead- sin no longer has power over Him because sin and death are partners in crime and Jesus cannot die again, He has conquered it
- In the same way we are to regard sin as conquered in us- defeated once and for all, and live like we believe it is true.- Read Rom 6:1-14- reckon yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord- i.e. Our flesh was nailed to the cross and we are no longer to consider sin to be influencing us, in the same way as it cannot influence Christ anymore- we are to consider ourselves like Christ to be outside of sin's jurisdiction.

The Nature of the Resurrection-v44 'It is sown a natural body it is raised a spiritual body'

- Paul uses pictures to illustrate how the resurrection body shall be different to our bodies as they are now. There will be a contrast, just as we see in nature to a lesser extent now. A seed planted looks different to a fully grown plant-v37. People are different to animals and fish and birds-v39. The heavenly bodies appear different to earthly things. There is a contrast between the light given as it appears to us from the sun compared to the moon and stars. In the same way our heavenly bodies will be a stark contrast to our earthly bodies.
- Examples of the contrasts will be the areas of : corruption/incorruption, dishonour/glory, weakness/power, natural/spiritual. Spiritual does not mean 'un-solid'- Jesus' resurrection body was solid, but it was heavenly
- We shall have physical resurrection bodies like His:

And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. 1Cor 15:49

'who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (Philippians 3:21)

'For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.' (Romans 8:29)

- **How Jesus looked.** He was recognisable but different- like someone you haven't seen for ages. Me with my hair/beard cut/dyed.
- He had scars- there was evidence it was the same person, but the wounds had healed- we will have perfect bodies.
- **The nature of His body- eternal.** He was raised never to die again, or age again.
- Reversal of entropy- the second law of thermodynamics. First law= amount of energy in universe is constant. 2nd law says the amount of useable energy for work is going down, and amount of useless forms of energy is increasing. I.e. Things in a closed off system will eventually decay and becoming less ordered and random unless an external force puts in the work necessary and breaks into the system. This is seen in all areas of life. Jesus has broken into the system of death and brought life.
- God will wipe every tear from our eyes. There will be no more pain, or curse, or sin, or sickness etc.
- The nature of His body- physical. Thought they'd seen a ghost at first. Why? Didn't expect to see Him. When else had this happened before He died? When Jesus walked on water- they thought it was His ghost. Jesus made it clear on these occasions He was not a ghost
- my parents when my mum had gone to loo & my dad did not realise & she got back into bed & he thought she was a ghost.
- People could touch Him. He ate. He sounded like Jesus. He had Jesus' knowledge-knew them and taught them. He had Jesus' character, personality.
- There was an intermediate state between the death and resurrection of Christ- His

spirit was with the Father the same day He died, as was that of the thief on the cross who repented, yet His body was in the tomb awaiting resurrection- same for us- if we die before Christ returns our spirits go to be with Him awaiting the day of His return- this is the first resurrection I believe- a resurrection of the soul to reign with Christ during this present age- the souls of Christians under the altar speak of being in Heaven without a physical body (just as we don't worry about our body in a dream- it all seems quite normal), the second resurrection then is akin to Jesus' resurrection.

- **The nature of His body- supernatural.** Could disappear- Emmaus road encounter- He disappeared before their eyes when He broke bread. Could appear even in locked rooms. Ascended into Heaven. Appeared in different form to different people.

Summary

Jesus resurrection:

- Facts are important
- The resurrection is essential
- The nature of our resurrection bodies

Prayer of Commitment

Song: There is a day