



The Case for
The Resurrection
of Jesus Christ

The Greatest Event in All of History

John Rataczak and David Wood

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FORWARD

By David Wood

The Life of a True Christian

It is truly an honor to be making a movie about Jesus for Jesus. The story of Jesus, the cross, the resurrection, the love that God has for us is awesome. We hope this book is a blessing to many of you as well. When John and I first started talking about this, we wanted to accomplish several things. To prove Jesus is God, that he is the only way to God and the only way to Heaven. I believe this book, like our upcoming movie, will prove all this and more. As we look more and more into the world, we see nations crumbling, wars escalating, people suffering, and only one answer that will solve all of this: Jesus. Our hope is by reading this book, watching our movie, you will open your eyes and heart to him. The Savior of the world, the God of everything wants a relationship with you! How special is that? To have a relationship with Jesus, to talk and pray with God, is truly amazing. A blessing indeed. Please enjoy this book.

In the following chapters John does an amazing job laying out the facts, the truth, the love that Jesus has for us and all that his is today, tomorrow, and forever. I wanted to share more of my faith, my story, and hope it encourages you to do the same. To wake up each morning and start the day with Jesus is truly a blessing. But it did not start that way for me. I found God much later in life, at the age of 38. Most of my early life was very messy, I was very selfish.

It wasn't until 2002 when Jesus became my Lord, my Savior, my everything. I hope and pray for you to find that love and peace just as I have for yourself. For many years I tried to use drugs, alcohol, and sinful ways to fill an emptiness in myself. Nothing worked until I let Jesus in my life. He is the only thing that can fill that void in us. I hope he is doing that for you now and I pray you give him a chance to. Nothing else in this life on earth will make a whole lot of sense until you let Jesus into your heart. Now, please understand: life on earth is hard, people are messy, the world is spiraling, but Jesus can calm the storms of life.

God never said it would be easy, but that he would be with us through it. Let Him (Jesus) do that, and think about this for a second: God, the creator of the world, the sky, the oceans, all the animals, plant life, the stars, the people, wants to spend time with you and me. The creator of the universe wants to hang out with us.

Amazing! Just like any relationship we have, parents, children, spouses, friends and family, the more time we spend together, the stronger and healthier the relationship. The same goes for Jesus, the more time you spend talking, praying, and reading the Bible, the stronger the relationship will be with Jesus. If you really have faith, really believe, then you know we are spiritual beings as well. Spirit, soul, flesh, and mind, but when the physical body dies, the spiritual part lives on forever. Yes, we live forever. We will be able to spend time with Jesus forever. The stronger the friendship is with Jesus here on earth, the better life will be in heaven and for eternity. Please focus on Jesus, talk to Jesus, pray to Jesus.

As you get closer to Jesus you gain greater wisdom, clarity, and understanding of your life, your calling, your ministry, and your journey here on earth. When you are close to Jesus, his love and his light shines brightly on and within you. People of the world will see this special love and peace in you, and they will want it. Walking with Jesus daily on an everyday basis, is the most important thing any of us can do, that peace, that quiet time, that precious time with the Lord, needs to be number one on our list each and every day.

The life of a true Christian is serving, and serving others means serving with no agenda or wanting something in return. Just like Jesus did, he came to serve. We must be very aggressive with our attitude and our will to spend quality time with our Lord each day! Until Jesus returns as the final solution for the world, the sin and the problems will remain. Only then in his second coming will we see real comfort and complete peace. For now, though the world is crumbling, falling apart at the seams. Only Jesus can save a human soul, and only Jesus can save this world.

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Jesus is always there to help us. God and the Holy Spirit are always there to help us. No matter how messed up your life is, Jesus is there to help. Just reach out and ask him to help, he will. Jesus *wants* to bless you and will.

Letting Jesus in your life and having Jesus in your life, will fill the void. It makes life easier. It helps to explain why life is the way it is, why we are here on earth for this short time. We live forever. This short time on earth is just a small part of everything. Make the most of it, encourage others who are struggling. Be a blessing just as Jesus blessed us. This should be the foundation of your life. Share your love of Jesus with others. Your testimony, your story, your life in Jesus is a powerful message. Please share your story as John and I share our story with you.

God bless you.

Matthew 18:3-5, *"...Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me."*

Romans 6:17-18, *"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine that was delivered to you. Being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."*

Introduction

It should go without saying that the greatest event in all of history was performed by the greatest Person in all of history, our Savior Jesus Christ!

Consider the significance of religious, political, and military leaders from past generations. Can anyone say about them that they are still held in high esteem thousands of years later?

Great generals win battles for a country or a kingdom, but those countries and kingdoms are later replaced by something else. The same can be said for the impact of inventors, medical researchers, explorers, philanthropists, and political figures.

They all have their place, but they simply cannot compare to Jesus!

Consider this list that explains something of His amazing influence:

1. Our calendar is based on the year of His birth.
2. In America, every coin and dollar bill says, "In God we trust."
3. Jesus is the subject of untold thousands of hymns and Gospel songs.
4. He is also the focal point of innumerable poems, speeches, sermons, and books.
5. He has been worshipped by billions of believers worldwide ever since His resurrection.
6. He is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament.
7. He is the Savior revealed in the New Testament, including everything from His virgin birth to His return in glory.
8. He is the King of Kings Who will live forever.
9. Every prayer a Christian utters or thinks is in His name.
10. Even though the salvation He offers is rejected by many, His Person and work are respected by billions of people.
11. A very large percentage of charitable work is done in His name.
12. His teachings inspire children, comfort adults, motivate missionaries and pastors, and convict sinners.
13. He is rightly regarded as the virgin born Son of God by billions.

14. Because He is risen, all that He is, all that He has taught, and the salvation that He offers are *eternal!* It is His resurrection that empowers believers to live for Him.

It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that gives the entire world hope!

The resurrection of Jesus Christ *is* the greatest even in all of history!

In recent days this author has come into contact with Mr. David Wood, a fine Christian who is producing a major film on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

He has graciously asked me to write this booklet as a supplement to and a fundraising tool for his work.

Many thanks to him for his kind invitation!

May the film have significant impact in two ways: 1. The salvation of lost souls, and 2. encouragement/edification for those who have been saved by God's amazing grace!

These things having been said, this booklet's content will be divided into four sections:

- I. Things that happened just before His resurrection
- II. The evidence for His resurrection
- III. The significance of the resurrection
- IV. Practical applications from the resurrection

An appendix will follow.

A quiz will be presented at the end of this booklet.

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I. Things that happened just before His resurrection.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ gives a clear picture of our Lord's agony in the garden, His trials, and His crucifixion.

Jesus counted the cost that He would pay as He prayed in Gethsemane. What an amazing scene! The sinless Son of God was about to bear *all* the sins of every person who has ever lived! Further, He knew that during those three hours His Father, with Whom He had enjoyed eternal fellowship, would have to turn His back on Him. This is made clear in His passionate cry in Mark 15:34, *My God, my God, why hast Thou forsake Me?*

Things became extremely intense as Jesus left the garden. Consider these facts: 1. His disciples had not prayed with Him. 2. Judas betrayed Him with a kiss. What an insincere expression of affection! 3. He was arrested in the late night hours by a band of religious leaders who should have welcomed His deity and offer of eternal life! 4. A *certain young man* (Mark 14:51-52) fled away from Him naked, adding to the indignity of the occasion. 5. A "trial" was conducted before Annas, the father-in-law to Caiaphas, the high priest. 6. Next, our Lord was led away to the house of Caiaphas. To think that so many scribes and others stayed up to such a late hour to plan such a travesty, even involving the high priest at his own house!

The only thing Jesus said during all this was that He was their promised Messiah!

While all this was happening, Peter stood away and watched, warming himself by a fire on that cold night and denying Him three times!

About dawn Jesus was led before the Sanhedrin to be formally condemned by His own people! They concluded, without any proof, that there was no need for further "evidence" and that He should be put to death!

Now His "trial" was brought before Roman officials. The Jews did not have the authority to put a man to death; so our Lord was now brought before Pilate very early in the morning. Frankly, Pilate was annoyed by

the action of the Jews. He asked them what accusation they had (John 18:29) and told them to judge Him according to their law (John 18:31a).

He then called Jesus into his palace and questioned Him. During this questioning Jesus insisted that He was the King of the Jews and that His kingdom was not of this world, assuring him that He was not about to overthrow the Roman government.

Pilate finally approached the mob that had gathered. They wanted Jesus to die, and the sooner the better! When Pilate heard this accusation, He determined that Jesus was a Galiliaen. He decided to have Him sent to Herod, the Roman official who was in Jerusalem at that time and had authority over the region of Galilee.

Pilate wanted nothing to do with this whole situation. He had found no fault in Jesus; he probably wanted to go back to sleep; he had our Lord sent to somebody else.

Herod already knew that this Jesus was no ordinary man and hoped to see a miracle (Luke 23:8). Jesus said nothing while in his presence. Many of the chief priests and scribes were there and continued to scream out false accusations.

Herod, wanting to have some “fun,” insulted our Lord by having expensive clothes paced on Him! Then he sent Jesus back to Pilate and became his friend (Luke 23:12).

Jesus had been dragged from place to place all during the night, but nobody could find any wrongdoing on His part. Of course, there was no sin to be found!

Now He stood before Pilate a second time. He told the Jews that he had formerly found no fault in Him (Matthew 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:13-25) and hoped to find a “political” solution to this problem.

Pilate’s wife had told him that she suffered a dream and felt strongly that nothing should be done against Jesus!

He was facing pressure as the crowd continued to shout, “Crucify Him!” He decided to offer the crowd a choice. They could allow Barabbas, a known insurrectionist and murderer, into their midst; or they could allow Jesus to go free.

He decided to have *another* private conversation with Jesus, again finding no fault in Him.

Finally, after seeking to release Him but not being able to do so without great reactions against him, he said, “Behold, your King (John 19:14)! Then he washed his hands in front of the mob and said, “I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it (Matthew 27:24). By this cowardly statement he was giving legal permission to put Jesus to death!

No doubt Pilate tried to find some justification for this when the mob shouted, “His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matthew 27:25)!

Soon the Roman soldiers at the scene cruelly abused our sinless Savior! First, they beat Him severely; then they brought Him to the Praetorium and “clothed Him with purple” and “plaited a crown of thorns” on His head (Mark 15:16-19; Matthew 27:27-30). These soldiers then mocked Him in various ways and spit on Him!

Criminals were required to carry their own cross to the place of execution. Jesus was in such a painful condition that He was too weak to bear that cross very far; and so a man named Simon of Cyrene was summoned to help Him.

Having reached the top of Golgotha (“the place of a skull”), He was nailed to a cross!

During the first three hours He hung there in agony, saying these few words: *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves...* (Luke 23:28-31).

Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34).

Verily, I say unto thee, Today thou shalt be with Me in paradise (Luke 23:43).

Woman, behold thy son (John 19:26)!
Behold thy mother (John 19:27)!

The next three hours were the most critical. This was the time when God the Father placed all our sin on His only Son so he could pay the penalty on our behalf!

It was now noontime. *There was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour* (Mark 15:33; Matthew 17:45; Luke 23:44).

During these amazing hours Jesus said these words: *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me* (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:35)!? The Father turned His back on His own Son while He bore our sin!

I thirst (John 19:28).

Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit (Luke 23:46).

It is finished (John 19:30)! This was a cry of victory which was declared after a battle had been won! The work of redemption was complete!

Immediately after our Lord died that day, four significant events took place: 1. The veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom. 2. There was a great earthquake. 3. Many believers who had died previously were raised from the dead and appeared in Jerusalem. 4. A centurion at the scene believed on Jesus.

II. Evidence for His resurrection.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ presents considerable evidence that Jesus rose from the grave on the third day.

Very soon after Jesus died two men approached Pilate for permission to bury Him properly: Joseph of Arimathea (a very wealthy man) and Nicodemus, the Pharisee who had talked with Jesus quite some time earlier (John 3). The point to be made here is that Jesus was surely *dead* at this point. He rose three days later!

There were *many* reasons why the disciples should have believed Jesus would come forth out of that grave.

A. There were Old Testament Scriptures which revealed a strong belief in resurrections and descriptions of resurrections.

Job (Job 14:13-14; Job 19:25-27), David (Psalm 16:9-10), Isaiah (Isaiah 26:19), and Hosea (Hosea 13:14) spoke about upcoming resurrections. Abraham believed his son Isaac would return after being sacrificed (Genesis 2:5). Further, God allowed Elijah to raise up the widow's son (I Kings 17:9-24); Elisha raised up the Shunammite's son (II Kings 4:32-36); and while a dead man was being buried, his body touched the bones of Elisha and he was revived (II Kings 1:21).

B. Jesus raised three people from the dead during His ministry.

These included the son of a widow from Nain (Luke 7:13-15a), Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:23-25), and Lazarus (John 11:43-45).

C. Jesus had prophesied about the future resurrection of believers (Luke 14:14; 20:34-36a; John 5:25-26, 28-29a; 6:38-40).

D. Jesus prophesied His own upcoming resurrection (Matthew 12:39-40; 16:21; 20:17-19; Mark 8:31; 9:31-32; John 10:17-18).

Jesus made thirteen recorded post-resurrection appearances:

He appeared to Mary (Mark 16:9; John 20:11-18), to other women (Matthew 28:9f), to the Emmaus disciples (Mark 16:12f; Luke 24:13-33), to Peter (Luke 24:3; I Corinthians 15:5), to ten of the Apostles (John 20:19-24), to eleven of the Apostles, including Thomas (John 20:26-29), to more than five hundred at the same time (I Corinthians 15:6), to James (I Corinthians 15:7), to several disciples at the Sea of Galilee (John 21), to the Apostles just before His ascension (Mark 16:9; Luke 24:50f; Acts 1:9); and to Paul (Acts 15:8).

His resurrection was *bodily*. When Jesus told Mary, *Touch Me not* (John 20:16-18), the Greek verb clearly should be translated, *Stop touching Me*, indicating that He was risen with a physical body. Mathew 28:9 indicates that the ladies “came and held Him by the feet.” Two passages indicate that the grave clothes were left behind and yet *wrapped neatly and in a place by itself* (Luke 24:12; John 20:3-8). These verses are very significant!

If Christ’s body had been stolen, as some try to assert, those who took it would have to overpower the Roman guards, break the seal of the Roman government that was placed in front of the tomb, roll a very heavy stone away (probably up an embankment!), take off the grave clothes and leave them wrapped neatly, and carry His naked, dead body away!

What grave robber would do all that!

On the other hand, when Christ arose, He rose triumphantly, and He took the time to leave such convincing evidence behind! Why would He be in such a hurry? Jesus is the Son of God, and He wanted all who will look honestly at the evidence to realize that He really did rise from that grave!

Even “doubting Thomas” was convinced, crying out, “My Lord and my God (John 20:28)!”

As Luke wrote, “He shewed Himself alive after His passion *by many infallible proofs*, being seen of them forty days” (Acts 1:3).

III. The significance of the resurrection.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ will lead us to realize the following:

The Apostles gladly gave their lives for their risen Savior! They were never the same once they were convinced that He is alive forever! Surely they would not have suffered martyrdom for a lie!

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is mentioned in *every* sermon in the book of Acts. The Apostles realized that a dead Savior could not offer eternal life, but a risen Savior can and does!

And if Christ is not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain (I Corinthians 15:14).

What would be the point of preaching something or believing something that is not true? If the Apostles are false witnesses about the resurrection, how can their testimony about anything else be trusted? And if their testimony is not to be trusted, how can anyone truly believe in the Gospel or any other message in the Bible?

Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: Whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not (I Corinthians 15:15).

Salvation cannot be a reality without His resurrection. *And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; and ye are yet in your sins* (I Corinthians 15:17).

Those who have died but trusted in Christ have simply perished if Christ did not rise from the grave. *Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished* (I Corinthians 15:8).

The whole idea of Christianity is worthless if He is not risen! *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable* (I Corinthians 15:19).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ shows that He really is God. All the religions of the world have a founder whose body is still in a grave somewhere, but our Lord lives! *And declared to be the Son of God with*

power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4). His resurrection provides justification for those who believe. But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification (Romans 4:24-25).

Because He lives, Jesus is able to intercede on behalf of those who believe in Him. *Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us (Romans 8:34).*

Because He lives, He is able to empower believers in many ways. *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, Which He wrought in Christ, **when He raised Him from the dead,** and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:18-20).*

Because He lives, He will judge all men righteously. *Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised Him from the dead (Acts 17:32).*

Because He lives, He is able to promise a resurrection for believers. *But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by the Spirit that dwelleth in you (Romans 8:11).*

IV. Practical applications from the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

May *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ* inspire us in a number of ways!

Having written a magnificent chapter on our Lord's resurrection, the Apostle Paul concludes that it should inspire believers to serve Him fervently. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord* (I Corinthians 15:58).

Jesus is coming back to take believers to be with Him forever. *For if we believe that Jesus died **and rose again**, even so them also which sleep will God bring with Him. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord* (I Thessalonians 4:14,18).

The resurrection of our Lord is a source of power in the lives of believers. *Therefore we are buried with Him in baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life* (Romans 6:4).

His resurrection has taken away the sting of death and gives us a great reason to rejoice! *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ* (I Corinthians 15:55-57).

His resurrection offers great assurance to believers of a wonderful eternal life in heaven. *That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection.... Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself* (Philippians 3:10, 21).

Unbelievers, consider the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He will save you if you believe in Him!

Christians, rejoice! He is risen!

Appendix: A New Testament Survey of Resurrection Truths

Our Lord's resurrection from the dead would be an indisputable fact if all the evidence we had about it came from the prophecies of the Old Testament and the clear revelation from the Gospel accounts.

On the one hand, these accounts have never been successfully proven false even though many sceptics have attempted to discredit them.

On the other hand, it is important for those who *do* believe in His resurrection to understand and appreciate *further* emphasis and explanation that came after He had ascended to the Father.

We can learn much about the *significance* of the resurrection of Jesus Christ by surveying New Testament truth.

The following is an attempt to expound on that body of truth.

Acts 1:3. *To whom also He shewed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*

Luke, "the beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14), having written the Gospel bearing his name, wrote the book of Acts to a believer named Theophilus (Acts 1:1).

It is interesting to note that the Holy Spirit inspired Luke to write about our Lord's resurrection so quickly.

He shewed Himself alive! Not only did Jesus leave behind an empty tomb and His grave clothes neatly wrapped in that tomb; not only did He commission "two men" (no doubt they were angels) to explain to the women who came to the grave site that He was already risen (Luke 24:1-10); but He also presented Himself alive!

We have already listed His post-resurrection appearances. Consider how He did these things. He approached Mary individually; He walked with two Emmaus disciples; He came to the upper room *twice* (the second time to restore "doubting Thomas"); He restored Peter; He appeared to over

five hundred; He met with the disciples just before He ascended to the Father.

Legal experts readily admit that evidence that is presented over a period of time (“forty days”) and to many people is very difficult to refute. Adding to the evidence is the fact that He did it in different places, in different ways, and with different intent.

He was encouraging; He was teaching; He was commissioning.

To put it another way, our Lord was simply continuing the work He had done throughout His earthly ministry. He was alive and showing His love, His submission to the will of His Father, His passion to train His disciples, and demonstrating to many that He surely is the *risen* Son of God!

The nail prints in His hands and feet were among the “infallible proofs.”

The evidence for His bodily resurrection was (and still is) overwhelming! Luke makes that clear in this important verse.

Acts 1:22. *Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection.*

In this verse Peter, the man who had so seriously failed His Lord about three months before, is now the Apostle who is leading the early church.

He stood up and spoke about Judas (Acts 1:15f), emphasizing that there needed to be a replacement for him.

It was required that the replacement be “a witness with us of His resurrection.” Paul makes it clear (I Corinthians 9:1) that *an apostle* must be one who has seen the risen Lord and be appointed by Him to service.

The other Apostles “appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. Matthias was “numbered among the eleven Apostles (Acts 1:26).

The significance of this choice is that an Apostle needed to be an eyewitness of Jesus' resurrection. These men (and Paul, who later became an Apostle) were called to reach the entire world to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Keep in mind, these men were called to serve in the first century! They did not have automobiles, trains, or airplanes in which to travel. They did not have printing presses, telephones, or computers to spread the message.

Surely, these men needed *assurance* and a powerful *motivation* to take on such a ministry! God's answer to these great needs was their eyewitness of our resurrected Lord!

Acts 2:24. *Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.*

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come” the Apostle Peter “lifted up his voice” (Acts 2:14) and delivered a very powerful message.

He had the boldness to tell thousands of Jews, even Jewish leaders, that they had crucified Jesus Who had done “miracles and wonders and signs” (Acts 2:22) to prove His deity.

Then He unapologetically declared that “God hath raised Him up,” fulfilling a prophecy made by David in the Psalms (16:10).

Beside demonstrating an eagerness to call out the people for their sin and a great conviction that Jesus is their risen Savior, he made points that we can take from this verse.

1. “Whom God hath raised up” tells us that the Father was involved in His Son's resurrection. Surely, it was the Father's will that Jesus come to life again!
2. “It was not possible that He should be holden of it” tells us there was *no way* that He would remain lifeless in the tomb. Peter was so aware of Jesus' deity, prophecies, and mission that He made this amazing assertion in his first sermon. He spoke these words and thousands believed.

Acts 2:31-32. *He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses.*

These words in the Pentecost message were spoken to Jews who had a great respect for David, their second king. David lived about a thousand years before Jesus and received this great message. No doubt many of the people assembled there, especially the religious leaders, knew this passage in the Psalms. This is why “when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart.”

The combination of resurrection truth, powerful boldness to speak up, and reference to a passage from the Word of God made a major difference in the hearts of “about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41) that day!

Notice also that Peter said it was not just *his* opinion, but rather the testimony of all the Apostles who stood there in front of the crowd.

Acts 3:15. *And killed the Prince of Life, Whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses.*

Earlier in Acts 3 Peter healed a lame man by “at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful.” Jesus had healed many; now Peter was doing something similar.

There were many people nearby and Peter was led by the Holy Spirit to deliver a second powerful Gospel message to them.

He referred to Jesus as “the Prince of life.” That description was amazing! The Source of all life (see John 1:4) had been crucified, yet He lives again!

Further, Peter was able to heal that lame man by resurrection power and more than willing to declare the resurrection message again!

The story continues in Acts 4. “The priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees” were grieved at Peter’s message and “put them in hold unto the next day” (Acts 4:3).

Peter and John were persecuted for their faith but because of resurrection power (after being threatened by a number of religious leaders), they said, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20). These two men were tested, but they would not deny Jesus!

What character and boldness Peter and John showed that day because they were serving a risen Savior!

In Acts 4:4 we are told that about five thousand people believed in the resurrection message and its power.

In Acts 4:10 Peter explained to all who would listen that the miracle of healing was by the name of Jesus “Whom ye crucified, Whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole.”

The power that the early church had came from the work of the Holy Spirit and the message of the resurrection.

Acts 4:33. *And with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.*

Amazing things were happening in Jerusalem. Three thousand people were saved at Pentecost; five thousand more were saved a few days later. The people prayed (Acts 4:31) and “the place was shaken where they were assembled together.”

And now the other Apostles were preaching that powerful resurrection message, and “great grace was upon them all.”

Acts 5:30-32. *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him.*

A great revival was taking place. “By the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people” (Acts 4:12) and

“believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women” (Acts 4:14).

The religious leaders thought their “problem” had been solved when Jesus left this earth, but now they realized there were twelve men who were diligently carrying on the work He had trained them to do!

They “laid their hands on the Apostles and put them in the common prison, But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors...” (Acts 5:18-19a).

The religious leaders were dismayed and angry. The officers of the prison “feared the people, lest they should have been stoned” (Acts 5:26).

Finally, the high priest found the Apostles busy serving the Lord and asked, “Did we not straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name?” (Acts 4:28).

Peter and the other Apostles replied, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29)!

Then Peter spoke the same message: Jesus had been crucified, He rose again, He offers forgiveness of sins, and the Holy Spirit confirms these facts.

The Apostles became stronger as they continued to present the resurrection message! They were not afraid of men. In fact, “they departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:41-42).

That same message caused the Jewish council to take “council to slay them” (Acts 5:33).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the issue every person had to resolve. Many believed and were saved. Others became angry and wanted to kill anyone who dared to preach such amazing truth.

Acts 10:40-41. *Him God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before god, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead.*

Acts 10 describes the conversion of “a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band” (verse 1). Up to this point the Gospel message had been delivered exclusively to Jews, but now God determined that the time had come for the Apostles to reach Gentiles as well.

This was astonishing to Peter and the other Apostles! After all, from the time of Abraham until the time of Jesus the Scriptures were written by Jews. The judges, priests, and prophets were all Jews. The Apostles were all Jews. Jesus was a Jew and ministered so tirelessly to the Jews in Israel!

God sent a vision to Cornelius (Acts 10:3-6). The message was clear: he was to seek out Peter.

God also sent an unusual vision to Peter. He was confused but certainly desired to honor God’s will (Acts 10:9-16).

“Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen might mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon’s house, and stood before the gate” (Acts 10:17).

Before long Peter traveled to Caesarea and met with Cornelius and others. “And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (Acts 10:28).

Peter continued, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34). He recognized that Gentiles could be saved!

His message to Cornelius and the others was that Jesus had died, had risen, and had revealed Himself to the Apostles.

No doubt Peter quickly remembered that he and the other Apostles were to preach the Gospel to all nations (Matthew 28:19) even “unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The heart of the message to Cornelius was the fact that Jesus had died for him and was raised up “the third day.” Peter delivered the same message to a Roman military official that he did to his Jewish brethren.

Acts 13:30-33. *But God raised Him from the dead; And He was seen many days of them which came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is written in the second psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.*

Now the Apostle Paul is on his first missionary journey, having been sent out by the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3).

After a short ministry on the island of Cyprus (Acts 13:4-12) he and Barnabas came to Galatia. His normal practice was to enter local synagogues and deliver an Old Testament based sermon.

After a brief survey of Jewish history Paul emphasized the resurrection of Jesus Christ: “But God raised Him from the dead” (13:30); “And as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption” (13:34); “But He, Whom God raised again, saw no corruption” (13:37). David was buried and his body decayed, but Jesus never suffered corruption because He rose again (Acts 13:36-37).

“The Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath” (Acts 13:42) and “many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God” (Acts 13:43).

The positive reaction to Paul’s bold preaching was “when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48).

The negative reaction to Paul's bold preaching was that "the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts" (Acts 13:50).

Paul learned important lessons in Galatia that Peter and the other Apostles had learned earlier. There are always strong reactions to the resurrection message! Those who believe, Jews or Gentiles, will be saved; those who reject the message often become hostile to it.

Paul also had the same *boldness* that the other Apostles showed every time they had preached: "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold" (Acts 13:46), and after being expelled from the city "they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium" (Acts 13:51).

Paul was so convinced of our Lord's resurrection and power to save lost souls that he kept preaching to all who would hear, whether they believed or not! By-the-way, in due time Paul returned to preach the Gospel to the people of that city again!

Paul's message was just as "resurrection-centered" as all the other Apostles.

Acts 17:2-3. *And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, Whom I preach unto you, is Christ.*

Now on his second missionary journey, Paul came to Thessalonica and preached in their local synagogue.

The results there were good: "some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

Of course, there was opposition, "and the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea" (Acts 17:10).

It is significant that Paul consistently used the Scriptures in his preaching and emphasized both the resurrection of Jesus and His anointing from God (the meaning of “Christ”= “anointed one”).

In Old Testament times there were three categories of people who were anointed. These were prophets, priests, and kings.

Jesus, of course, according to the Scriptures, is a prophet. The Greek noun for “prophet” is *prophetes*. The word is compound: *pro* means “forward” and *phetes* means “speaking.” Old Testament prophets received a message from God and spoke it to the people. Sometimes they preached a very convicting message. At other times they predicted future events. It is clear that Jesus as a prophet both “preached” and “predicted.”

Jesus is also a priest. This is a major theme in Hebrews. Old Testament priests listened to the needs/sins of the people and prayed to God, often offering sacrifices. Jesus listened to the needs of people (and still does!). He prayed for people (and still does!). And He offered Himself as a sacrifice for the people according to the will of the Father.

Further, Jesus is a king. While “on trial” He declared that he is the king of the Jews, and the Apostle John saw Him returning to earth as KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (Revelation 19:16).

One day “at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord....” (Philippians 2:10-11).

Obviously, no Old Testament prophet, priest or king was raised from the dead, but Jesus certainly was, and Paul preached that message boldly!

What a Savior we serve! He is the Prophet Who has declared the truth and showed us things to come. He is the Priest Who makes intercession for us constantly and actually died so we could be saved. He is the King Who is sovereign over all the universe! He does all this as the risen Son of God!

This great Savior (true Jews refer to Him as their Messiah) maintains all these ministries and rose again to make the offer of eternal life legitimate!

Acts 17:18. *Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babblers say? Other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.*

Paul is now in Athens, the intellectual center of the ancient world. Many of the early Greek historians (such as Herodotus and Thucydides), authors and poets (such as Aeschylus and Euripides), mathematicians (such as Thales and Pythagoras), architects (such as Agnaptus), and philosophers (such as Plato and Aristotle) made significant contributions from this city.

In Paul's day there were a number of intellectuals, particularly philosophers, residing in Athens.

Even more challenging was the influence of idolatry and polytheism there. Paul recognized this fact when he stood in the Aeropagus and presented the Gospel to the Stoics and Epicureans assembled there.

These erudite and arrogant men "mocked" Paul, suggesting that they were willing to hear him again.

In many respects this was a very difficult time for the Apostle. He "departed from among them" (Acts 17:33). Among the few believers in Athens were a man named Dionysius the Aeropagite and a lady named Damaris (Acts 17:34).

Paul had preached a message that these philosophers could in some ways respond to, even quoting one of their ancient poets Aratus: "For in him we live and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Paul was learning to become "all things to all men" (I Corinthians 9:22).

He also understood that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Corinthians 2:14).

"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the

foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (I Corinthians 1:23-25).

Unfortunately “educated” people often (not always!) do not and cannot accept the Gospel, and Paul’s presentation to these Athenian philosophers emphasized our Lord’s resurrection twice (sometime before Acts 17:18 and again in Acts 17:31).

No doubt Paul was frustrated with their lack of faith, but he surely would not change the message, including that all important point that Jesus is the crucified and risen Son of God Who paid for the sins of all mankind.

His methods changed from time to time, but his message never changed!

Acts 23:6-8. *But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.*

In this passage Paul is now in Jerusalem. Many believers to whom he had ministered warned him that he would be hated there, probably arrested or even killed.

The religious leaders felt about the same toward him as they did toward our Savior.

The warnings of Paul’s Christian friends had merit. He is now standing in front of the hostile Jewish council.

In his defense he emphasized that he had always “lived in all good conscience before God” (23:1).

The high priest Ananias “commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth” (23:2).

Paul indicated that God would smite him and called the high priest “a whited wall” (23:3), perhaps keeping in mind that Jesus called many of the same religious leaders “whitewashed sepulchers” (Matthew 23:27) years earlier.

When Paul realized that he had thus spoken to the high priest he apologized and then continued his defense.

He was not timid in his defense but was respectful to the high priest.

What amazing character Paul showed here!

Paul remained calm and evaluated the situation. He soon realized that the council was made up of members who believed in the possibility of a resurrection and those who rejected such a doctrine (the Sadducees).

He then emphasized his staunch belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is always a good thing to do!

After “a great dissension” the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle (23:10).

Soon the “Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome” (23:11).

God has a way of encouraging His own people when they have been faithful to Him! After many painful experiences on his second missionary journey, while at Corinth, He encouraged Paul by saying in a night vision, “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city” (Acts 18:9-10).

Paul was then empowered to preach and teach the word without harassment in that worldly city for eighteen months (Acts 18:11).

Now because Paul totally trusted in His Savior and would never compromise the resurrection message, he had *renewed assurance* that God had granted further ministry opportunities to him.

Acts 24:14-15. *But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.*

Paul is being questioned by both Jewish and Roman legal authorities, just as Jesus was years before. These people included the high priest Ananias (24:1), Tertullus (24:2), and Felix (24:22).

Nobody among these authorities could bring a legitimate accusation; so Paul cheerfully answered for himself (24:10), eventually pointing out to all who hear that he believed there would be “a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (24:15).

Paul’s message was consistent! Jesus was risen, and all men will one day rise to stand before God! As believers we know this to be true. II Corinthians 5:10 indicates that those who are saved will stand before the judgment seat (some refer to this as the *bema seat*, getting that term from the Greek noun). God will give rewards to His own based on the outcome of that judgment. Obviously, this should have a sanctifying effect on us! God knows what we have done and we will be held accountable.

Further, there will be a “great white throne judgment” (Revelation 20:11-15) for unbelievers. Tragically, because their names will not be found in the book of life, those who are there for that trial will be cast into the lake of fire.

Paul believed these things and even reminded Felix (24:21), “Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.”

Paul’s message was consistent, just as Peter’s was; his faith would not be shaken, for he had been promised by God that He had further ministry for him; and he was not ashamed to proclaim resurrection truth even to his accusers at every opportunity!

Acts 26:23. *That Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.*

Now Paul is standing in front of another political leader known as “King Agrippa.”

Festus and the king had determined to let Paul speak for himself even though Paul had already appealed to Augustus Caesar in Rome.

Paul showed some respect for Agrippa by saying, “I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews.”

Then Paul begins to explain to the King that he is a Pharisee and declares, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead” (Act 26:8)?

Paul goes on to point out how Jesus saved him while on the road to Damascus (Acts 26:8-18) and that “he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19).

The heart of his message to all who would hear is found in Acts 26:23 quoted above.

Festus, standing nearby, “said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make the mad” (Acts 26:24).

Paul asserted that he was not mad and invited Agrippa to believe in Jesus Christ, based on the truth of His resurrection.

Agrippa responds with a rather arrogant remark (Acts 26:28), suggesting that he would not be persuaded to become a Christian with so few words. The AV translation does not give the proper sense here.

Paul urgently said, “I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds” (Acts 26:29).

Paul would not be dissuaded from his urgent presentation of the Gospel. He heard Festus call him crazy; he heard Agrippa react negatively; these responses were sad but not to be unsuspected.

The truth is what mattered to Paul, and the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ were the ultimate messages that he delivered that day!

Summary of the record in Acts. Several things stand out. 1. Peter and Paul, the two leaders of the early church, emphasized the resurrection of Jesus Christ at every given opportunity. 2. The Jewish leaders were not open to the soul-saving message. As this author often says “Religion kills, but Jesus saves! 3. The resurrection empowered the Apostles to carry on the mission Jesus had given to them.

In the book of Acts we can see what the Apostles preached to people in a number of places and situations.

Now we will look at some of the amazing ramifications of the resurrection as we move into the epistles of the New Testament.

Romans 1:4. *And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*

Luke emphasized the *historicity* of our Lord’s resurrection very early in the book of Acts (1:3); Paul is here emphasizing something of the *theological significance* of His resurrection quite early in his epistle to the Romans.

The verb “declared” in this verse is quite interesting. It comes from the Greek *horizo* (to “mark off a boundary”). It is obvious that the Father values His relationship with the Son and that relationship is quite secure.

He was the Son of God in His preincarnate state (II Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:6) and still is after His birth from the womb of the virgin Mary.

Paul points out Jesus’ humanity in verse 3: “which was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh.”

He is virgin born and He is of a kingly line.

Most important, it was the resurrection from the dead that clearly marked Jesus off (note the reference to the Greek *horizo*) as God's Son because of His claims about Himself as God's Son and His prophecies that He would rise on the third day. This event, emphasized so strongly in I Corinthians 15, gave God's seal (note again the reference to the Greek *horizo*) with power (see II Corinthians 13:4).

It is vitally important that we understand two truths in verses 3 and 4.

First, Jesus became the God/man. We celebrate this miracle every Christmas. One might ask why it makes any difference that He came to this earth in such a body.

In order to offer the perfect sacrifice that the Father required to pay for sin, Jesus had to be holy. Since mankind is full of sin (Romans 3:23), no mereman could successfully do the job. If any of us gave our life for some other individual it would be a nice gesture, but because of our sin it would not cause the other person to be saved.

Jesus, of course, is the Son of God and is therefore sinless. It was the Father's plan that He come to this world and live that kind of life so that when He shed His blood on the cross the payment would be sufficient.

Just as important, in order to die for sinful man, Jesus had to be human. He did not come to die for angels or animals! He came to "seek and save that which was lost" (Matthew 19:11), and that means sinful mankind.

Simply put, in order to legitimately offer salvation to man, Jesus had to be God in order to be sinless. He also had to be man in order to die for man, and He is indeed the unique God-man! Praise Him!

Second, by all rights (notice the words "according to the spirit of holiness" in verse 4), Jesus' deity was powerfully (note "with power" in the same verse) demonstrated by His resurrection from the dead.

This was the theme of every sermon in the book of Acts; and it is a very important element of the Gospel that is highlighted throughout the New Testament.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the miracle of all miracles, and it is His resurrection only that declared Him to be Who He truly is!

Romans 4:24-25. *But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him Who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.*

There are many factors to consider in these two verses.

First, having dealt with the universality and awfulness of man's sin (Romans 1-3), Paul is explaining how God saved Abraham.

“For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith” (Romans 4:13).

God spoke to Abraham in a vision and explained to him that “he that shall come forth out of thy bowels shall be thine heir” (Genesis 15:4).

Sarah, Abraham's wife, was unable for many years to bare any children; so she insisted that he have a child through her maid Hagar. In due time a son named Ishmael was born of that union. Ishmael, however, was not the child of the promise that God had given to Abraham.

About thirteen years later, when Abraham was ninety-nine years old, God again appeared to him and said, “I will make My covenant between Me and thee, and I will multiply thee exceedingly” (Genesis 17:4).

Then in Genesis 17:15-16 God revealed to him that he would have a child through his wife Sarah (formerly called Sarai). Abraham laughed, asking God, “Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? And shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear” (Genesis 17:17)?

Abraham had an honest conversation with God, even laughing at first, but he believed Him! “And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6).

“And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age...” (Genesis 21:1-2). Isaac was the one through whom God’s promise would be fulfilled.

Paul refers to this period in Abraham’s life in Romans 4:18-22 and points out that “being fully persuaded...it was imputed to him for righteousness.”

In short, Abraham was saved because He believed God.

Second, salvation by faith was not offered to Abraham only, but also for all who place their faith in Jesus’ finished work (His death, burial, and resurrection). “Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him” (Romans 4:22).

Jesus, a descendant of Abraham, offers propitiation (=removal of wrath that was originally caused by our sin) to all: “And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (I John 2:2)!

Third, *righteousness* was imputed to Abraham when he believed God. This brings us to justification, one of the greatest truths about salvation.

Justification is closely associated with sanctification, particularly *positional* sanctification. The word “sanctify” means “to make holy.”

Explanation: there is a sense in which believers are already sanctified the moment they believe. Probably the clearest verse on this important subject is found in I Corinthians: “Paul, called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, Unto the church of God which is in Corinth, *to them that are sanctified* in Christ Jesus, called to be saints... (I Corinthians 1:1-2).

Notice three important points from this passage.

First, “to them that are sanctified” is a perfect tense in the Greek. This tense indicates action which is already accomplished but also indicates results that continue to abide. This universally completed action is something that happened the very moment the people in the church at Corinth were saved. The continuing *result* of having been made holy is a PERFECT standing before our holy God!

How amazing! Jesus bore our sin in His sinless body (Isaiah 53:4-6) and gave us His holiness so we could have a perfect standing with the Father! That has to be the most unfair trade in all of history, totally of grace!

Second, notice the phrase “called to be saints” here. A believer does not have to “wait” to be honored by some ecclesiastical body in order to be a saint. It is one of many miracles that happens at the moment one accepts Christ as Savior.

Third, this holy standing is accomplished in Christ. We cannot save ourselves, and we surely cannot make ourselves holy, but in salvation the holiness of Christ is imparted. When God the Father looks at a believer He does not see his sin but rather the sinless blood and sinless life of Christ applied.

What an amazing salvation Christ provides, but believers are not only positionally sanctified, they are also *justified*. Paul speaks of this in Romans 4:25: “and was raised again for our justification.”

Key to the doctrine of justification is the verb *logizomai* in the Greek of Romans 4:22. The idea of this verse is to “place on an account.” It is actually a legal term, indicating that God the Father keeps a record of the miracle of salvation in the lives of believers.

Here is the picture we should get when we consider justification. We are in God’s courtroom. Satan is our accuser, Jesus is our attorney (I John 2:1), the Father is the Judge. Having considered our case, that we have been saved and made holy through positional sanctification, the Father *declares* us to be absolutely holy!

This is much better than being “not guilty.” Holy means *sinless!*

Consider how magnificent such a truth as this is! God legally declares us to have a perfect standing and records it in the courtroom in heaven! When He declares such, we can be sure that it is right and that no creature in the entire universe can overturn such a decision!

Fourth, all the blessings Abraham experienced and all believers in Christ experience in salvation are based on the resurrection of our Lord: “and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25).

It would be accurate to say that if Jesus had not risen from the grave our faith would be a miserable belief in a dead man. It would be nothing more than “religion.”

But it is clear in these verses that because Jesus *did* rise again, conquering sin, death, and hell, that He has provided the basis for God the Father to legitimately declare believers to be holy!

It is apparent that the Father planned our salvation. Just as surely, Jesus paid for our salvation. Most important, the resurrection *secured* our salvation!

Our sin was disgusting, but Jesus paid for it (“Who was delivered for our offenses”); and He was “raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25).

To Him be the glory forever! And may we thank Him for the justification we have in Him *because of His resurrection!*

Just as God provided a miraculous birth for Abraham and Sarah so many years ago, He continues to provide the miracle of the new birth to believers today! And He does it because our Savior lives!

Romans 5:10. *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

Paul’s epistle to the Romans is the most complete explanation of the Gospel in Scripture.

The Holy Spirit led the Apostle to explain in great depth what happens when a believer is saved by God's grace.

“But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him (Romans 5:8-9).

In this great passage Paul writes about mankind's sin, Christ's great love in spite of our sin, His death which involved the shedding of His blood, the deliverance from wrath because of the salvation He so graciously offers, and the fact that we shall be saved by His life.

Although the word “resurrection” does not appear here, it is certainly described. The One Who died now lives!

One of the great results of His resurrection is that our salvation is “in Him,” a concept often repeated in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. Because we are in Him and He is in us we can be sure that our salvation is eternal: “we shall be saved by His life” which is an eternal, resurrected life!

Romans 6:4-5. *Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.*

We have another multi-faceted passage here.

Paul writes first about death and burial (Romans 6:4). This pictures the natural state of an unbeliever.

There is a tendency abroad today to minimize the desperate condition we all face before receiving Christ as Savior, but we do well to consider what the Scriptures tell us:

Jesus told Nicodemus, “Ye *must* be born again” (John 3:7). The word “must” literally means “it is binding.” Thus it is clear that our Savior insists on the necessity of the new birth (regeneration).

Why is man in such need?

First, we are all sinners who have disobeyed the sovereign Creator (Romans 3:23). In fact, a good definition of sin would be “anything that fails to glorify God.” This is the obvious meaning of “and come short of the glory of God” in this verse.

Second, we are without strength to change our situation. “For when we were yet *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:16). Religion basically says, “Do something!” The Scriptures say we are “without strength.”

Third, God considers man to be following Satan. “The field is the world, the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are *the children of the wicked one*”(Matthew 13:38). “In this the children of God are manifest, and *the children of the devil...*” (I John 3:10). “And said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, *thou child of the devil*, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord” (Acts 13:10)? See also John 8:44.

Fourth, God considers man to be “*dead* in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1b). Unfortunately, there are many who seem to feel that all unsaved man needs is a “dose of the right medicine,” and all will be well. The new birth is much more than that! It is a *miracle* that comes only from God! To Him be all the glory forever!

The reference to His resurrection (“was raised from the dead”) has two important ramifications. 1. Jesus *did* rise from the dead. 2. When we are saved an amazing miracle takes place. Just as Jesus died and His body was not accomplishing anything for a time, He was revived. Something very similar happens at the moment we are saved. We were dead spiritually, but because of a new birth, based on His death and resurrection, we are now alive!

Paul speaks of walking in “newness of life.” Perhaps a rather silly illustration will help to explain this. Imagine we were allowed to observe a cat being changed into a dog, all in a single miraculous moment.

The animal that once ate cat food, occasionally spoke “meow” or “prrrr,” chased after mice, and had an amazing curiosity about things now eats dog food, speaks “ruff-ruff” and barks, sometimes chases after cats, and is generally a protector of men.

Nobody would argue that the animal that was once a cat is still a cat. The same applies to what happens when a hell-bound sinner becomes a saint!

The believer now Has God as his heavenly Father. He is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He is destined to spend eternity in heaven. His identity is with Christ. He has an appetite for spiritual things.

Clearly, he is not the same as he was before! Here are four Biblical descriptions of the change:

First, a believer receives power to overcome temptation. “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (I John 3:9).

The words for “sin” in this verse are in the present tense in the Greek, which means that the action would be continual. The implication is that a believer is, with God’s help, about to withstand temptation in this life. Yes, we all sometimes stumble into sin (I John 1:8, 10), but God provides a way to gain victory and forgiveness when we ask Him for it (I John 1:9).

Second, a believer loves his fellow believers. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth Him that begat *loveth him also that is begotten of Him*”(I John 5:1). “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost” (Romans 5:5) so we can love both God and our fellow man, especially believers, as we ought. This is what Paul meant when he wrote, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

Third, a believer is obedient to God. “By this we know that we are the children of God, when we love God, and *keep His commandments* (I John 5:2).

Fourth, a believer loves God's Word. "As newborn babes, *desire the sincere milk of the Word*, that ye may grow thereby" (I Peter 2:2).

These four manifestations are found in believers who are *walking* in "newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

This passage should cause us to think about our *association* with Christ. What does this mean?

We need to appreciate what He has done for us and by His grace live the same kind of life. We should come to an understanding that our salvation has changed everything: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17).

Paul writes about being "buried with Him by baptism" and "buried with Him by baptism into death" in this passage.

Important point that needs to be made is that baptism does NOT save: "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel" (I Corinthians 1:17). The word "but" here is a very strong adversative, making a contrast between "preaching the Gospel" and baptizing believers.

Jesus did command that believers be baptized (Matthew 28:19), but He never taught that this ordinance saves a soul. Baptism, properly understood, is a step of obedience for those who have accepted Christ as Savior.

Now we come to the symbolism of baptism and how to apply it.

While there are many in Christian circles who have differing views of the *mode* of baptism, the emphasis on our association with our Lord's death, burial, and resurrection in these verses certainly make a strong case for immersion.

Finally, let it be said that it is the *resurrection* of Jesus Christ that not only saves souls but also provides the power to live a godly life in this present evil world! These are clear teaching from this important passage.

Romans 6:9-11. *Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

When Jesus died on the cross, He completed the work of redemption.

In the Graeco-Roman world of the first century A.D. virtually every city of any size had what was commonly called an *agora* (the Greek verb "to redeem" is *agorazo*). The agora was "a place of assembly, a market place." The common activity in a city's agora was the purchasing of property or goods.

The Biblical picture is quite vivid. In our natural state "We are all as an unclean thing, and all righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).

In addition to our unclean condition, we are in a slave market of sin, and even though filthy in every aspect, Christ redeemed us!

We were standing on a raised platform with filthy clothes and looking helpless. We were "on sale" as slaves, and Jesus came along and determined to redeem us! The price that He was willing to pay was His sinless blood!

He paid that awful price only once. "For this He did *once*, when He offered up Himself" (Hebrews 7:27). This is why Paul wrote, "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more" (Romans 5:9).

This is significant. From His standpoint, He does not have to go back to the cross and die an agonizing death every time a sinner repents and believes in Him for eternal life (see Acts 20:21). He surely gave His all for us! From our standpoint (thank God!), we do not have to *wait awhile* for Jesus to die again in order to be saved! The payment has been made already!

Further, “death hath no more dominion over Him” (Romans 5:9). He is alive forever (Ephesians 3:21) and we who are saved will live forever!

Not only does His death and resurrection give us assurance of eternal life, but they also give us hope to get victory over sin in this life. “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Romans 6:12). This is a consistent theme in the Pauline epistles.

Romans 8:10-12. *And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*

Romans 5:12 declares, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men.” In Adam the entire human race fell into sin, resulting in death.

Romans 8:10-12 indicates that Christ and His resurrection are God’s solution to man’s ultimate problem.

These verses indicate that the resurrection actually *quicken*s (“makes alive”) our mortal bodies. There are two ways to explain this truth, both having Biblical merit.

First, as Paul says in verse 12, “We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.” We who have been born again are surely different creatures and because of resurrection power do not have to live under sin’s dominion in this life.

Second, the Scriptures teach a doctrine of glorification in heaven. Glorification involves a total change in the bodies of believers.

“For our conversation is in heaven: from whence we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: *Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body*, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.” We will not be God, but we will have bodies similar to our Savior’s!

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, *we shall be like Him*, for we shall see Him as He is” (I John 3:2). The amazing transformation will take place when our bodies are resurrected from the grave (“when He shall appear”). In this world no man has seen God in all His glory, but then we will be able to “see Him as He is”!

“Whereby are given unto us exceedingly great and precious promises: that by these *ye might be partakers of the divine nature...*” (II Peter 1:4).

“Whereunto He called you by our Gospel, *to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ* (II Thessalonians 2:14).

“That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that *He might present it to Himself a glorious church*, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:26-27).

In the omniscient mind of God, “For whom He did foreknow, He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified, *and whom He justified, them He also glorified* (Romans 8:29-30).

“The Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead” does (and will) accomplish these wonderful things forever! Resurrection power is eternal!

Romans 8:19-23. *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him Who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

Although the word “resurrection” is not found in these verses, it is clear that Paul is speaking about the resurrection of the bodies of believers.

Notice the phrase “earnest expectation.” Certainly it aptly describes the attitude of believers who are weary of this world and its ways! What older saint is there who is not thrilled with the Biblically held conviction that he is heaven-bound where pain and sickness will never exist?! That same brother also longs to be reunited with Christian family and friends who are already with our Lord! Paul certainly reached this point: “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you (Philippians 1:23-24).

Paul speaks about the “bondage of corruption.” This, of course, is the decay that takes place because of death and the sorrow it causes. He recognized the great truth of John 8:36: “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

The decay and destruction that sin causes extends even to God’s creation (=the entire universe). “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Romans 8:22).

Satan’s sin was instrumental in causing many angels to fall. Adam’s sin brought about the depravity of the human race. These two events caused the earth to be cursed: “And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also

and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat of the herb of the field” (Genesis 3:17-18).

These verses in Romans 8 indicate that sin has had devastating intergalactic consequences. This is why Peter was able to describe what will happen as God ushers in the final state: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night: in the which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (II Peter 3:10-13).

We learn more from the Apostle John: “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Revelation 20:15-21:2).

Sin will be punished forever; God will create a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem where believers will live forever.

Paul speaks of “the firstfruits of the Spirit” in Romans 8:23. When we combine this phrase with “the redemption of the body” in the same verse, the conclusions should be obvious. Sin caused man to fall, but we are saved by the death and resurrection of Jesus, Who is the “firstfruits.” Because He rose from the grave we will rise also!

Just as Jesus rose triumphantly and lives in holiness forever, He will create a new universe “wherein dwelleth righteousness” (II Peter 3:13). We wait for the “redemption of the body” (Romans 8:23). We can be sure of that blessing because of the reality and the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Romans 10:9-10. *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

In these verses the Apostle Paul explains what happens at conversion.

Notice the word “confession” here. The Greek verb is *homologeō*, meaning “to take the same attitude, to say the same thing.” When a person is presented with the glorious Gospel message and is under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, he needs to take the same attitude about Jesus and His work on the cross that the Father has.

In other words, that person should understand and eagerly believe that he is a sinner who can be saved by God’s grace. God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9). When such a person believes *in his heart* that Jesus rose from the dead to make His offer of eternal life legitimate, he will be saved!

Having been born again, the new believer does well to make a profession of his salvation before others. In time that believer should also endeavor to win others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Notice what Paul says a few verse later (in Romans 10:14-18): “How then shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Esaias saith. Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.”

The resurrection is crucial in being saved in the first place and should be a major theme as we present the Gospel to all who will hear it!

I Corinthians 6:14. *And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will raise up us by His own power.*

Earlier in this chapter Paul said, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you:

But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (I Corinthians 6:9-11).

To many these are “horrible sins.” Some might even consider them to be unforgivable. Thank God for Romans 5:20, “Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound”!

When sin runs into God’s grace it does not win!

Paul wants to assure people who have gotten saved from these backgrounds (frankly, that is *all of us!*) that he will raise them up because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

I Corinthians 15:3-4. *For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again according to the Scriptures.*

Notice that Paul says he delivered the simple Gospel message “first of all.” He was not “ashamed of the Gospel” (Romans 1:16) and made himself “all things to all men” in reaching lost people (I Corinthians 9:22).

The message was consistent. Christ died. Christ was buried. Christ rose again. These truths never change and were delivered *according to the Scriptures.*

So few today are as zealous to present this basic Biblical message. Paul made sure he did so “first of all”!

Just as important, He did all this “according to the Scriptures.” While humor, personal testimonies, and answering questions about other matters may have their place, we must remember ultimately that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17).

The reason we can have assurance in the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is that we are basing it on the clear revelation about it from the Bible, God’s holy Word!

Romans 15:12f. *Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?*

The question about resurrections springs naturally from the proof of the fact of the resurrection of Christ (note verses 1-11 of this chapter) and the continual preaching which Paul here assumes. “If Christ be preached” would well be translated “since Christ is constantly preached that He rose....”

There were sceptics in Corinth, possibly in the church, who denied the resurrection of dead people just as some men today deny that miracles happen or ever did happen. Paul’s answer is the resurrection of Christ as a fact. It all turns on this fact!

“But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen” (I Corinthians 15:13). Paul here is insisting that there *is* such a thing as the resurrection from the dead because if the contrary is true, Jesus is dead.

He goes on to explain how serious this really is. If He has not raised, 1. Our preaching is vain. 2. Our faith is vain. 3. We are false witnesses. 4. We are all still lost in our sin. These are thoughts from I Corinthians 15: 14-17.

What would be the value of preaching a lie or suffering for something that never happened!? More important, if Christ did not rise from the grave, we have no hope of eternal life! How could a dead Savior honestly say that those who believe in Him will “never perish” (John 3:16).

On the other hand, “now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept” (15:20). He rose first; believers will rise after Him.

Paul’s argument here is basically this: how could a risen, holy, eternal, loving Savior not offer eternal life!?

Paul continues by sharing illustrations in 15:35-44.

He is again refuting the argument that there can be no resurrection from the dead (15:35).

Obviously, seeds are dead before they spring forth with life (15: 36) and what comes forth is something quite different from what was originally sown (15:37-38): “And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain. It may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body.”

Paul goes on to say that the resurrection of the bodies of believers should be likened to the sowing of seeds in the ground. “So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption: it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body” (I Corinthians 15:42-44). Jesus Himself likened the sowing of seed to the preaching of the Gospel in Matthew 13.

Then Paul describes Jesus as a “second Adam”: “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthly; the second man is the Lord from heaven” (I Corinthians 15:45-47).

Paul is using simple illustrations to emphasize the glorious truth of eternal life in a glorified body. A natural picture-- Seeds are sown as lifeless, yet

they produce grain by God's power. A picture from history-- Adam sinned; that fact caused depravity in all and therefore death. Jesus, however, came as a man Who produces life because He rose again!

Next, Paul explains an important theological truth. "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (I Corinthians 15:50). We cannot save ourselves, but those who believe in Jesus "shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (I Corinthians 15:51). Jesus' resurrection causes this miracle to take place "in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (I Corinthians 15:52).

Paul concludes by offering great hope. "For this corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal must Paul on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, Which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:53-57). Such great hope surely has a practical application: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:58)!

II Corinthians 4:10-11. *Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.*

It would be an understatement to suggest that Paul had experienced considerable pain and difficulty in his ministry.

Consider the circumstances he endured:

Although many have the idea that he was "dynamic," he was not a good speaker. "His speech is contemptible" (II Corinthians 1:10; see also Acts 20:9-12).

He was not physically very strong (II Corinthians 10:10).

He eventually learned to trust the Lord, no matter what kind of financial situation he faced: “I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:12-13).

This trust extended to his physical needs as well as his financial needs: “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: For My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong” (II Corinthians 12:7-10).

It is fairly clear that Paul had a serious eye problem. Some feel this may have been the “thorn in the flesh” mentioned in II Corinthians 12. “Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the Gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? For I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me” (Galatians 4:13-15; see also Galatians 6:11, indicating that Paul had to write the signature to the epistle using large letters, apparently because of an eye problem).

He struggled mightily against sin at times, speaking of wanting to do what was right but not always doing it (Romans 7).

He had a spirit that would not allow itself to stop serving God even though the circumstances often were very difficult: “We re troubled on every side, yet not distressed, we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken, cast down, but not destroyed” (II Corinthians 4:8-9).

He faced many dangers. “Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in missions more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not” (II Corinthians 11:23-29)?

He even faced a serious bout of depression but ended up trusting in God: “For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God Which raiseth up the dead” (II Corinthians 1:8-9).

His confidence in the resurrection (note II Corinthians 1:9) was so strong that he was willing to endure all these things and even surrender his will to God: “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).

There surely could be *no doubt* that Paul was sincere when he declared, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21).

How could one man suffer so much and yet maintain a vibrant spiritual life? Answer: “For we which live are *always* delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, *that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh* (II Corinthians 4:11)! Paul was so confident in His faith that he considered suffering to be an opportunity for the resurrected life of Jesus to empower him. Can any other fact of history have such power!?

II Corinthians 4:14. *Knowing that He Which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.*

There is no doubt that we who believe in Jesus Christ will be raised up by the same One Who raised up Jesus (notice the first part of II Corinthians 4:14). It is also clear that Paul and the believers in Corinth will spend eternity with the Savior.

The second part of this verse raises an interesting question: did Paul believe he would be resurrected or will he be raptured with those who are alive at His coming according to I Thessalonians 4:13-17?

On the one hand Scripture is clear about the *immanency* of the rapture of the Church. The word “rapture” means the *snatching out* of believers to meet the Lord in the air. The word “immanency” means that this could take place *at any time*.

Consider the following evidence for immanency.

Matthew 24:42. “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”

Matthew 24:36. “But of that day and hour knows no man, no not the angels of heaven, but My Father only.” His coming is certain. The time of His coming could be at any time, but even Jesus is waiting for the Father to tell Him to come.

Luke 12:35-40. Because we do not know exactly when He will return for us, we should be always living for Him and expecting Him to appear.

“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning: And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.”

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light” (Romans 13:11-12).

Philippians 4:5. “Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.”

James 5:8-9. “Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.”

I Peter 4:7. “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”

Revelation 1:1. “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John.”

Thus immanency is something we should surely believe in!

Jesus could come back for us today, and we should stay close to Him at all times: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure” (I John 3:2-3).

Paul emphasized immanency, but he also knew that no man knows when the rapture (and subsequent resurrection of the bodies of believers who have fallen asleep) will take place.

That is why he says “shall present us with you” at the end of II Corinthians 4:14. We know today that this great event will take place when He comes again in the air.

The last point to be made from II Corinthians 4:14: He did not know whether he would pass away and be resurrected with others or whether he would be alive at His coming

Paul did know, however, that he would one day be in heaven with the Lord and those in Corinth who believed. His basis for believing this was the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

II Corinthians 5:1-5. *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is in heaven. If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now He That*

hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, Who also hath given us the earnest of the Spirit.

Having written about the many difficult circumstances he had faced in his ministry (II Corinthians 4), Paul here discusses the effects such trials have on us in this life.

He speaks of our bodies being “dissolved,” the need to “groan,” “being burdened,” “and mortality.”

Anyone who has lived very long on this earth very long understands that bodies experience pain. Those who know the Lord *long* to be in a better place where sin is nonexistent, where there will be no time limitations, where joy will be eternal, where fellowship with others will be better than we can imagine, where there is no environmental pollution, where there will be no taxation, where “we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

The remedy for our pain and strain in this world is the promise “that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” This is a result of the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Notice also that “He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, Who hath given us the earnest of the Spirit.” God the Father has planned our salvation; God the Son paid for our salvation; and God the Holy Spirit administers many of the blessings of salvation. The role of the Holy Spirit is twofold in this verse: 1. The intimacy that we have with Him in this life is great. After all, He indwells us (I Corinthians 3:16), but we live in this world with all its sin, limitations, and frustrations. In heaven relationships will be unhindered forever! 2. The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth (John 16:13). He works in the minds and hearts of believers, to confirm the truth of the Word He inspired (II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:21). Surely, He speaks to us in wonderful ways to explain that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a reality and a promise of spectacular things to come!

II Corinthians 5:15. *And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him Which died for them, and rose again.*

The high doctrine of Christ's atoning death carries a correspondingly high obligation on the part of those who live because of Him. Selfishness is ruled out by our duty to live "unto Him Which died" and rose again. "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Corinthians 6:20).

The death of Christ supplies the urgency to serve Him; His resurrection supplies the power to serve Him (Romans 6:4).

II Corinthians 13:4. *For though He was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God.*

Jesus became a man (John 1:14) and was crucified through weakness, but because of the will of the Father He lives forever.

In this world believers do well to understand that His "strength is made perfect in weakness" (II Corinthians 12:9).

He died and rose again. We will do the same by the power of God.

Galatians 1:1. *Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, Who raised Him from the dead;).*

Among the obstacles Paul faced in his ministry was the question of his apostolicity. There were people who opposed him for two reasons: 1. He was not one of the original twelve apostles. 2. He preached Jesus as crucified, buried, and risen again.

These opponents to the Gospel are generally referred to as "Judaizers." Paul dealt with them especially in his epistle to the Galatians and his second epistle to the Corinthians. These Judaizers preached a false Gospel ("another Gospel"—Galatians 1:6), trying to merge faith in Christ with works. The dependence on works included circumcision, obedience to the Old Testament Law, and adherence to many of the man-made regulations of first century Judaism.

Paul's response to the Judaizers was very strong: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we

have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8-9).

Paul was saved while journeying to Damascus to persecute Christians there.

“And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? And he said, Who art Thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:3-6).

Soon Paul entered the house of Ananias. The Lord said to him, “Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for My name’s sake” (Acts 9:15-16).

This was a confirmation that Paul was granted apostleship and commissioned to preach the Gospel.

Paul had seen the risen Lord and received a call to evangelize both Jews and Gentiles. These were the requirements for apostleship: “Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not apostle unto others, yea doubtless I am to you: for the deal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord” (I Corinthians 9:1-2).

Notice how Paul writes in Galatians 1:1. He received his apostleship “not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, Who raised Him from the dead.” His position was ordained by God the Father Who allowed him to see His resurrected Son.

No doubt Paul received great gifts to serve the Lord as an apostle. He needed every one of those gifts to carry on the ministry God called him to perform. The resurrection of our Lord was key to his call and the primary message he presented to lost souls.

Ephesians 1:19-20. *And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.*

Paul never got over the fact that he was saved by God's grace and granted an apostleship. He was thrilled to win souls to His Savior and endeavored to do that at every opportunity.

He recognized that salvation is a great miracle. God's miracles express His great power. Creation would be an obvious example. When God saves a soul, however, it took great creativity, power, holiness and amazing love!

Paul acutely recognized that man's salvation would not be possible without the resurrection of our Savior. He also expressed great reverence for the power God demonstrated when He rose Jesus from the dead: "according to the working of His mighty power, Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead."

The Father has granted that Jesus, having finished the work He gave Him to do, is now "at His own right hand in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:19-20).

Colossians 1:18. *And He is the head of the body, the church: Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence.*

In Colossians 1 Paul gives glory to the Father and the Son for making believers "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (1:12), "deliverance from the power of darkness" (1:13), "redemption through His blood" (1:14), the creation of all things (1:16), and the headship of Jesus Christ (1:18).

Jesus' leadership is over the entire church, the body of believers from all over the world throughout the ages since the church began in the first century. "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon

the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:18-20).

Jesus is first in the spiritual realm as He is in nature (verses 18-20)! The phrase “firstborn from the dead” is the justification for His having preeminence in all things!

Colossians 2:12. *Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, Who hath raised Him from the dead.*

Paul is here dealing with the matter of baptism in much the same way as he did in Romans 6. “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Romans 6:11-12).

In the symbol of baptism the resurrection to new life in Christ is pictured with an allusion to Christ’s own resurrection and to our final resurrection. Paul does not mean to say that the new life in Christ is caused or created by the act of baptism. God had the power to raise His Son from the dead and He has the power also to give us new life in Christ by faith.

I Thessalonians 1:10. *And to wait for His Son from heaven, Whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.*

In verse 9 Paul reminded the Thessalonian church that they had “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” Their past was one of sin and idolatry. Their present goal was to serve God.

Verse 10 discusses their expectation for a “wrath free” future based on the resurrection of their Savior Jesus Christ.

There are two reasonable ways to interpret the phrase “wrath to come.”

The most obvious deliverance is the eternal punishment in hell that awaits those who have rejected Christ and His offer of eternal life. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians about this in his second epistle to the church. “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of power” (II Thessalonians 1:8-9).

It is also quite possible that the church was concerned about the tribulation period that begins very soon after the rapture of the church. Some there in Thessalonica seemed to believe that the Lord would receive His own after this “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7,18). This period is described in considerable detail in Revelation 5-18. It lasts for seven years.

Antichrist rules the earth during the second half of the tribulation period (Revelation 13:5). His “Babylonian” system will be destroyed (Revelation 18) and our Lord will return to cast Satan and the false prophet “alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone” (Revelation 19:20).

Jesus will then rule on the earth for “a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4-6).

True believers will be delivered from both the eternal punishment of hell and the horrors of the tribulation period. Paul declared that Jesus’ resurrection has “delivered us from the wrath to come” (I Thessalonians 1:10).

I Thessalonians 4:14-17. *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

This is the blessed hope of the believer. One day, when the Father determines the time is right, Jesus will come to meet His own in the air, “and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

The word “if” in verse 14 is much better translated “since.” The promise is for those who believe in the resurrection of Jesus. We know that He is coming again for us. When He does return there will be a massive resurrection of the dead followed quickly by a catching up of those who are alive at His coming. What a meeting “in the air”!

This glorious event should be distinguished from the Lord’s return to reign on the earth for a thousand year period (“the millennium,” discussed earlier).

The promise is eternal: “and so shall we ever be with the Lord”!

II Timothy 1:10. *But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ, Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.*

In the previous verse Paul writes, “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

God the Father planned salvation by offering a holy calling that was not based on any good thing in anyone’s life. He did this sovereignly (“according to His own purpose”) before He created the universe.

His planning also included the “appearing of our Savior,” the God-man Jesus Christ Who has *abolished* death! He is able to do this because of His resurrection power.

This is the central theme of Paul. “...and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.” Jesus is the death of death and the Gospel is the message!

II Timothy 2:8. *Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my Gospel.*

Paul had ministered with Timothy and trained him to be a teacher/trainer of Christian leaders. “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”

Part of the training was an understanding of the humanity of our Savior (“of the seed of David). Our Savior rose bodily because He is a man as well as God.

Paul reminded Timothy that the resurrection is the central theme of the Gospel (“according to my Gospel”).

In addition, Paul explained that he was currently suffering in prison because of his eagerness to present the Gospel message. “Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the Word of God is not bound” (II Timothy 2:9). He commanded Timothy to be of like mind. “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (II Timothy 2:3; see also II Timothy 2:11).

II Timothy 2:18. *Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.*

In the preceding verses Paul emphasizes diligence in learning correct doctrine (I Timothy 2:14-17). The word translated “study” in verse 15 is from the Greek verb *spoudazō* which means “to be diligent.”

If there were two things Paul dedicated himself to do, they would include evangelism and correct doctrine.

In verses 16-17 he commands Timothy, “But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus.”

Paul wrote about Hymenaeus in I Timothy 1:19-20. “Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.”

Paul speaks of “delivering unto Satan” in I Corinthians 5:5. In that context he was dealing with awful sin in Corinth. “It is commonly reported that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife.”

His advice, when the church was gathered together (I Corinthians 5:4), was to excommunicate those who had committed such sin “for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (I Corinthians 5:5).

The purpose of disallowing one into the fellowship of a church (“delivering over unto Satan”) was not to be “holier than thou,” but rather that “the spirit may be saved” and that the offender “may learn not to blaspheme.”

Apparently Hymenaeus and Philetus had taught that some believers had already been resurrected, leaving others behind. This is contrary to what Paul wrote in I Thessalonians 4:13-18. The Lord will gather every believer, whether living or in a grave, to Himself in a moment and at the same time so that they can be with Him forever!

Paul would not allow the incorrect doctrine that Hymenaeus and Philetus taught. They perverted the central truth of the Gospel, the resurrection.

Hebrews 6:2. *Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*

Earlier in this epistle the author declares “Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use

have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:10-14).

The recipients of Hebrews had not learned much so there was a need to review simple matters.

“Of the doctrine of baptisms” does not mean specifically Christian baptism in this epistle (see 9:10 and also Mark 7:4). It is a reference to ablutions or immersions such as the mystery religions and the Jewish cults required for initiation, proselytes, and worshippers. Some of the disciples of John the Baptist had disputes with the Jews over purification (John 3:25; see also Acts 19:2-3).

“The laying on of hands” was a common sign: of blessing (Matthew 19:13), of healing (Mark 7:32), in the choice of the first deacons (Acts 8:17f; 19:6), in separation for a special task (Acts 13:3), in ordination (I Timothy 4:14; 5:22; II Timothy 1:6). Prayer accompanied this laying on of hands as a symbol.

“The resurrection of the dead” (both of the just and unjust mentioned in John 5:29 and Acts 24:15) is a basic truth that all should easily understand and believe. Everyone who names the name of Christ and believes in Him may need *further* instruction about their upcoming resurrection and eternal life in heaven with Jesus, but the basic facts are sometimes misunderstood or even perverted. This truth is vital and needs to be proclaimed often!

Hebrews 11:19. *Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.*

The reference here is to Abraham and his son Isaac (11:17). God commanded that he “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”

Abraham, now well over one hundred years old, had learned to trust God completely and planned to offer up Issac as a sacrifice.

As he approached the mountain, he “saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, *and come again to you*” (Genesis 22:5).

This verse, along with Hebrews 11:19, is an indication that Abraham was so close to God that he believed his son would die on the altar but would be resurrected.

God had promised him, “I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed be numbered” (Genesis 14:16).

When God made this promise, all there was to Abraham’s seed was himself and his wife Sarah. When God commanded Abraham to offer up Isaac, all there was to Abraham’s seed was himself, his wife, and his son.

Keep in mind that none of the books of the Bible had been written in Abraham’s day! All he had was God’s promise and God’s command, yet he believed in resurrections *based on nothing beside what God promised and commanded*. Genuine faith has no problem trusting that Jesus rose and we who believe will rise also! We now have the revelation of Scripture, both Old and New Testaments. What excuse can we offer to God for not believing!?

In Abraham’s case, God provided a ram as a substitute sacrifice (Genesis 22:13). In our case, God has provided His only Son as a substitute sacrifice (Isaiah 53:5-6 and many other verses!)

Hebrews 11:35. *Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.*

“Women received their dead raised to life again.” There are two references in the Old Testament in which these resurrections took place. God used Elijah to raise the son of a widow from Zarephath (I Kings 17:17f) and Elisha to raise the son of a lady from Shunem (II Kings 4:8-37).

After describing the great faith of quite a number of Old Testament believers, the chapter emphasizes the great faith of others who suffered.

The Greek verb for “tortured” is from *tumpanizo* and means “to beat the drum, i.e., to beat to death.” There are non-biblical references to such awful circumstances (II Macc. 6:18; IV Macc. 9:12) before the time of Christ.

“They were stoned” in verse 36 was fulfilled in II Chronicles 24:20-21, speaking of Jehoiada. Tradition teaches that Isaiah was “sawn asunder.” The Old Testament prophets were abused and suffered greatly for their faith and obedience to the Lord. Our Lord spoke about this in His sermon on the mount, “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matthew 5:12).

These Old Testament saints believed they would be resurrected and see God. Further, their faith was so strong that they were willing to suffer greatly. God commends their faith by promising “that they might obtain a better resurrection.”

Hebrews 13:20-21. *Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

It is helpful for us to consider the phrase “the God of peace.” In Romans 5:1 “we have peace *with God*” through our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is based on the justification that takes place at the moment of salvation. Because we have been made holy in our standing, God is no longer angry at us. See also Ephesians 2:14.

“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7). This speaks of the calmness He produces in us when we face difficult times in this life.

Jesus is “the Prince of peace” (Isaiah 9:6) Who provides both security in salvation and the sacred quietness we crave in this life.

The remainder of this verse is basically a benediction (i.e., a closing reminder of the greatness of our Savior). Jesus is risen, He is our Shepherd, He shed His blood for us! Because of these eternal truths, we can (and should) do “that which is wellpleasing in His sight” (verse 21).

I Peter 1:3-4. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away reserved in heaven for you.*

Peter here expresses praise to the Father Who planned our salvation and the Son Who paid for our salvation.

We who are saved have been born again (“begotten us again unto a lively hope”) *by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* If He has not risen, our “faith is vain” (I Corinthians 15:14). But He *is* risen and has regenerated us! How could the omnipotent, holy, gracious Son of God Who has accomplished something so great as the resurrection do anything less!?

The “lively hope” is the assurance that we have “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away reserved in heaven.” There will be no pollution or any sign of decay in heaven! And amazingly enough, it is *forever!*

I Peter 1:20-21. *Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in the last times for you, Who by Him do believe in God, That raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.*

One of the most amazing things about the death and resurrection of our Lord is that it was “foreordained before the foundation of the world.”

Consider all the factors that were involved in this:

1. God the Father determined to send His only Son into this sin cursed world even before He created it. This meant Jesus was aware of the misery, pain, and rejection He would face from all the ages!

2. “When the fulness of the time was come” (Galatians 4:4) the Holy Spirit miraculously implanted our Savior in the womb of the virgin Mary. To think that He was willing to become so small and confined for those nine months!

3. Then He was born in a manger, grew up in a disrespected town called Nazareth (see John 1:46), submitted to Mary and Joseph for years (Luke 2:51), “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not” (John 1:11), faced consistent opposition from the religious leaders in Israel, had “no place to lay His head for three years (Matthew 8:20), trained disciples who often misunderstood Him and lacked faith at the first, was arrested, tried, beaten, spit upon, mocked, and crucified!

Our Savior knew all these things and yet was willing to endure them for us all!

His birth, death, and resurrection had been prophesied for hundreds of years, and He came to accomplish the work of redemption that the Father had planned. It is His death and resurrection that saves us when we believe. His resurrection was glorious!

I Peter 3:18. *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.*

As was mentioned before, Jesus died for all mankind *once*. Old Testament priests were called upon to offer sacrifices virtually every day for their own sins and the sins of the people. Redemption is an accomplished fact. Jesus Himself cried out, “It is finished” (John 19:30) as He died for us!

Jesus’ died that “He might bring us to God.” One of the great results of His work on the cross is reconciliation between sinful man and a holy God (Colossians 1:20-21).

According to this verse the Holy Spirit was involved in our Savior’s resurrection. What is asserted is not that the flesh died and the Spirit was made alive. He, the God-man Jesus Christ, body and soul, ceased to live in the flesh, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, began to live a resurrection

life. I Peter 3:19 indicates that His spirit remained alive: “By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison.”

I Peter 3:20-21. *Which sometime were disobedient when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

In II Peter 3:15-16 Peter makes reference to Paul, “And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are *some things hard to be understood*, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.”

These two verses are “hard to be understood,” but here is a plausible explanation: Perhaps a hundred years after the warning (Genesis 5:32; 6:3; 7:6) Noah was preparing the ark and as a preacher of righteousness (II Peter 2:5) forewarned the people, who disregarded his message.

“By water” means “by means of water” as the intermediate agent. They came through the water rather than on the ark (Hebrews 11:7).

In verse 21 water in baptism is an antitype of Noah’s deliverance by water. So here baptism is presented as corresponding to (prefigured by) the deliverance of Noah’s family by water.

The saving by baptism which Peter here mentions is only symbolic (a metaphor or picture as in Romans 6:2-6), not actual as Peter explains in the next phrase, “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh.” Baptism, Peter explains, does not wash away the filth of the flesh in a literal sense, as a bath for the body, or in a metaphorical sense of the filth of the soul. No ceremony really affects the conscience (Hebrews 9:13f).

Peter expressly denies baptismal remission of sin by saying, “but the answer of a good conscience toward God.” This happens when one has

repented, turned to God, and is now making a public proclamation of that fact by means of baptism.

Paul expresses the same sentiment in I Corinthians 1:17, “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.”

The miracle of salvation is accomplished “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Revelation 1:5-6. *And from Jesus Christ, Who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

The Apostle John is writing “to the seven churches which are in Asia” (Revelation 1:4) with a message “from Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:5).

Jesus is the “faithful witness” Whose “testimony is true” (John 21:24).

He is “the first begotten of the dead.” This is a Jewish Messianic title (Psalm 88:28 and as in Colossians 1:18) and refers to priority in the resurrection to be followed by others. He rose first and by His power and grace we who believe will be resurrected later.

Jesus, by His resurrection, won Lordship over the “kings of the earth” (Revelation 17:14; 19:16), an offer Satan made to Him if He would surrender (Matthew 4:8f).

In Revelation 5:10 we have again “a kingdom and priests.” The idea here is that Christians are the true spiritual Israel in God’s promise to Abraham as explained by Paul in Galatians 3 and Romans 9. Each member of this true kingdom is a priest unto God with direct access to Him at all times.

Jesus “washed us” (a one time and completed action) and loves us always!

To Him be the glory forever!

Revelation 1:18. *I am He That liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

The word “liveth” is a very strong verbal construction in the Greek called a periphrastic participle. It means *constantly in a state of living*. “For evermore” literally means “unto the ages of the ages” and is even a stronger expression of eternity than in Revelation 1:6.

The point is that Jesus lives forever and offers eternal life!

“The keys of hell and death” is an idea conceived in Matthew 16:18 as a prison or walled city. The keys are a symbol of authority, as we sometimes speak of giving someone the keys of a city.

Hades here means the unseen world to which death is the portal. Jesus has the keys because of His victory over death. This same graphic picture can be seen in Revelation 6:8; 20:13f. The key of David is found in Revelation 3:7. The key of the abyss is found in Revelation 9:1; 20:1.

This verse emphasizes our Lord’s resurrection and eternal sovereignty over all things.

Revelation 20:4-6. *And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*

Apparently these verses refer to Christ and the Apostles (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30) and some of the saints (I Corinthians 6:3), and martyrs from the tribulation period. God will allow these people to reign with Him.

There is a debate as to the meaning of the phrase “This is the first resurrection.” Some believe it is a return of the martyrs and confessors to

life at the beginning of the thousand years. According to this view the first resurrection is a special incident in the present life and has no parallel with I Thessalonians 4:16 where the dead in Christ are raised before those living are changed.

Others believe John here pictures the regeneration (new life) of Matthew 19:28 and the restoration of Acts 3:21.

This is a difficult problem to resolve. The best we can do is call attention to the general judgment out of the books in Revelation 20:12 and to the general resurrection in John 5:29 and Acts 24:15.

There are seven beatitudes (“blessed and holy”) in the book of the Revelation: 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14.

“The second death” is the spiritual death of Revelation 2:11; 20:14; 21:8 in contrast to the first or spiritual death.

“Priests of God and of Christ” refer to servants of God who serve Him and reign with Him (see Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 22:3, 5; Matthew 19:28).

Whether we understand these verses correctly or not, the promise is very clear: “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power...” (Revelation 20:6).

Some conclusions/applications

Having looked carefully at *Biblical truth* regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we do well to consider the following points:

Jesus presented Himself alive in *many ways and in many places*, making doubt about the resurrection an untenable position.

His resurrection was a fulfillment of prophecies He made previously.

He showed His great love and power during His post-resurrection ministry.

God the Father planned His coming to earth, His death on the cross, and raised Him from the dead.

Death has lost its sting because of His resurrection.

There was *no way* Jesus would not rise from the dead!

Jesus' body did not decay. This pictures what our bodies will be like in heaven.

The fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ gave the Apostles great boldness to preach the Gospel.

The resurrection of our Savior and all the ramifications of it was a consistent theme of the preaching of the Apostles.

The resurrection of Jesus empowered the Apostles to keep serving Him in spite of imprisonment, persecution, and many times of tribulation.

Not all people believe in the fact of His resurrection; some actually pervert this all-important fact.

Preaching the resurrection was a powerful message that God used to save many lost souls.

One of the messages associated with the resurrection is that men should believe and repent.

Our Lord's death, burial, and resurrection were accomplished *once*. The price has been paid, and the work of redemption is complete.

His resurrection makes His offer of eternal life legitimate. Religious leaders are buried in a tomb somewhere. Our Savior lives forever!

We have many reasons to rejoice because He rose again.

We do well to comfort others in times of bereavement because He rose from the grave. We will see Him.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the "firstfruits" of an amazing truth: we will be raised also.

The message of the resurrection is for all people.

The living Shepherd became the sacrificial Lamb Who rose again!

Our *methods* in presenting the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ may change, but the *message* cannot be altered in any way.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a proof of His deity.

The justification of a believer is based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

God is no longer angry at believer's sins because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

When a believer submits to water baptism He is associating with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and making a public testimony to what Jesus has done in saving him.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is closely associated with the redemption He accomplished for believers.

Death has “no more dominion” over Jesus or His own because of His resurrection.

Jesus is the second Adam. Adam sinned and that fact caused all men to be sinners by nature who face an eternity in hell. Jesus is the sinless Man Who paid for sin and rose from the dead for those who will enjoy eternity in heaven.

We live in a sinful world. As a result there is much groaning and suffering here. Believers have a hope that heaven is certain because Jesus rose from the grave. There will be no groaning there!

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a message we must deliver to a lost world.

The death, burial, and resurrection are facts *according to the Scriptures*.

As Paul wrote, we would have no hope, would be false witnesses, and would be miserable people if Christ is not our risen Savior. Our faith would be no better than that of religion.

We will be reunited with believers who have already passed because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Surely, we should live for Him in “newness of life” because of His resurrection.

Jesus is now seated in heaven, praying for us, because of the resurrection.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ can be misunderstood and even perverted. As a result, we must defend this all-important truth.

Belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ produces maturity in the life of those who believe.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was foreordained before the foundation of the world.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was *bodily*.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is indeed the *greatest event in all of history!*

May we give praise to Him because He lives!

Christ Arose

Robert Lowry

*Low in the grave He lay,
Jesus my Savior!
Waiting the coming day,
Jesus, my Lord!*

*Vainly they watch His bed,
Jesus, my Savior!
Vainly they seal the dead,*

Jesus, my Lord!

*Death cannot keep his prey,
Jesus, my Savior!
He tore the bars away,
Jesus, my Lord!*

*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!*

Because He lives

Gloria and William Gaither

*God sent His Son,
They called Him Jesus.
He came to love, heal, and forgive!
He lived and died to buy my pardon,
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives!*

*How sweet to hold
A newborn baby,
And feel the pride and joy he gives!
But greater still the calm assurance,
This child can face uncertain days because He lives!*

*And then one day
I'll cross the river,
I'll fight life's final war with pain!
And then as death give way to victory,
I'll see the light of glory and I'll know He lives!*

*Because He lives
I can face tomorrow
Because He lives
All fear is gone!*

*Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living just because He lives!*

A quiz on the resurrection of Jesus Christ

True-False

1. Jesus knew He would die and rise again even before the world began.
2. If Christ did not rise from the grave our faith is in vain.
3. Nobody touched the body of Jesus after His resurrection.
4. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a source of power to serve Him in this life.
5. Jesus left His grave clothes outside the tomb.
6. Jesus was buried in a poor man's grave.
7. Judas betrayed our Lord for thirty pieces of silver.
8. Jesus loved Thomas and Peter and restored them after their denials and doubts.
9. Pilate was warned by his wife not to allow harm to Jesus.
10. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was spiritual, not bodily.
11. The Emmaus disciples had a burning in their hearts when Jesus was teaching/preaching to them great truths about Himself.
12. Nobody in Old Testament times believed in the resurrection of dead people.
13. The resurrection of Jesus Christ took place on the Jewish Sabbath.
14. Jesus showed Himself alive to over five hundred believers at once after His resurrection.
15. Jesus would be able to save a soul if He had not risen from the dead.

16. The resurrection of Jesus Christ has significance to both doctrine and practical Christian living.

17. The disciples were never told about our Lord's resurrection before it took place.

18. Believers should explain the significance of the resurrection when presenting the Gospel to unbelievers.

19. John was not sure about the resurrection when he first arrived at the empty tomb.

20. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest in event in all of history!

The Greatest Event in All of History

Consider the significance of religious, political, and military leaders from past generations. Can anyone say about them that they are still held in high esteem thousands of years later?

Great generals win battles for a country or a kingdom, but those countries and kingdoms are later replaced by something else. The same can be said for the impact of inventors, medical researchers, explorers, philanthropists, and political figures.

They all have their place, but they simply cannot compare to Jesus!

About the Authors



God led John Rataczak to the ministry during his freshman year at Bob Jones University. While there he earned a B.A. in Bible, an M.A. in Pastoral Studies, and a Ph.D. in New Testament Text (Greek).

His teaching experience is in Greek, Hebrew, Apologetics, Theology, English Bible, Biblical Backgrounds, and Church History at three Christian colleges and two graduate schools. His pastoral experience includes ministries in Pennsylvania and Ohio.

Presently John is the sole proprietor of Eleutheros Books and is an adjunct professor at a seminary in Liberia. He is the father of two sons and lives in Ohio. John's heart is in serious Bible study and evangelism. He also has an interest in current events and sports.

David Arthur Wood is a man of faith, first and foremost, a global businessman, a philanthropist, and sits on numerous boards and initiatives. He has been in the media, technology, real estate and fundraising world for most of his 38 years in business.



As an Executive Producer, David Wood is currently working on numerous films, TV projects and web series. In addition, he is currently writing books and curriculum, and spends his personal time in research and reading. David is constantly learning new things. Thereby, obtaining more direction and wisdom from God.

David's big media project is The Resurrection of Jesus Christ, a \$300 million dollar film and game, that he and many hope will demonstrate the love of God, and set a new benchmark in Christian film making like Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ, which has been a global phenomenon and blessing.