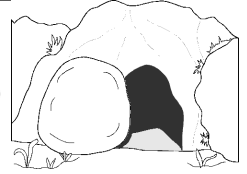


The Resurrection of Jesus

The Teaching of the Resurrection in the First Century Church (9 of 12)



No church grew in its number of outright converts faster than the first-century church. Perhaps the reason why is because of their consistent message focused on one key irrefutable fact—the resurrection. In every post-resurrection sermon the most common topic is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. This fact was the wheelhouse of the apostles and they stayed on point as they preached to believers and unbelievers, Jews and Gentiles alike.

As Christians search for key evidence to persuade others about Jesus Christ they must look to the resurrection. Some may try to begin by teaching about the authority of the Lord. Yet, authority will come very naturally after the plain proof about the resurrection is taught. Others may try to begin their quest to teach their neighbor by looking at the plan of salvation. Yet, to do so is putting the cart before the horse and trying to drive forward on a horseless cart! If one recognizes Jesus as Lord and Savior by His life, death, burial and resurrection then following the Savior's instructions with regard to salvation will follow naturally.

The book of Acts provides a history of the church immediately following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. The "Acts" of the apostles are recorded including many details of their sermons and defenses of their belief. Scan the cited passages below in the book of Acts and you will find a common recurring theme in the teaching of the first-century church—the resurrection. The pages of Scripture are saturated with this key evidence.

For example, Peter, in the first gospel sermon on Pentecost used the foreknowledge of God in prophecy and the recent history in Jerusalem to establish the resurrection (Acts 2:22-32). The result? 3,000 were baptized into Christ on that day (Acts 2:41). He again refers to the resurrection as he teaches the Gentile household of Cornelius in Acts 10:36-42.

In Acts 3, after the healing of the lame man in front of the temple, Peter and John tell the Jews they have "killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses" (3:15).

After the beautiful miracle in front of The Beautiful Gate, the Jewish council tries to intervene as they realize the message about Jesus is spreading like wildfire. As Peter stands before them on two separate occasions he constantly reminds them of the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 4:8-12; 5:27-31).

Within days of the establishment of the church, the apostolic message was summarized as: "...with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 4:33).

Even Stephen's fiery sermon (cut short by the angry mob) ended with a reference to the exalted Christ (Acts 7:51-56).

By the time we get to Acts 8, Luke begins summarizing the apostles' message as "preaching Jesus" (Acts 8:35).

However, then the book of Acts finds a new antagonist turned protagonist in Saul of Tarsus. As he joins the number of disciples he once persecuted,

Paul's main message is also the resurrection of Jesus. This is true in Antioch (13:23, 28-37), among the philosophers at Athens (17:16-18, 31-32) and in Jerusalem (Acts 23:6). As Paul stands before both Felix and King Agrippa he uses the resurrection in an effort to persuade these political figures (Acts 24:14-15, 20-21; 26:6-8, 22-23). Even as Paul faces possible execution in Rome because of His belief, He is still "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence..." (28:31).

Without leaving the book of Acts, we can already see the repetition of the resurrection. Keep turning page upon page of Scripture and the same message is repeated (Romans 1:1-4; 4:23-25; 6:3-5, 8-9; 8:11; 10:9; 14:9; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 6:14; 15:3-5; 2 Corinthians 1:9; 4:11, 14; 13:4; Galatians 1:12,16; Ephesians 1:13-14, 19-21; Philippians 2:5-11; 3:8-10; Colossians 1:18; 2:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 4:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17; 1 Timothy 3:16; 2 Timothy 1:8-11; Hebrews 2:9-10; 5:7-9; 10:12; 12:2; 13:20; 1 Peter 1:3, 19-21; 3:18, 21-22; 1 John 1:1-2; 5:20; Revelation 1:4-5).

Scan the teachings of the apostles and it will become abundantly clear the resurrection was constantly on the tip of their tongues and pens. If the resurrection brought men to Jesus Christ in the first-century it can still do so in the 21st century. Christian, are you using the resurrection as you teach others? Unbeliever, have you honestly considered the evidence of the resurrection?

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