

A Special Note from Bill Cleveland, Sojourners Group Leader

Why is the resurrection of Jesus Christ important?

The resurrection of Jesus is important for several reasons. First, the resurrection witnesses to the immense power of God Himself. To believe in the resurrection is to believe in God. If God exists, and if He created the universe and has power over it, then He has power to raise the dead. If He does not have such power, He is not worthy of our faith and worship. Only He who created life can resurrect it after death, only He can reverse the hideousness that is death itself, and only He can remove the sting and gain the victory over the grave (1 Corinthians 15:54–55). In resurrecting Jesus from the grave, God reminds us of His absolute sovereignty over life and death.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is also important because it validates who Jesus claimed to be, namely, the Son of God and Messiah. According to Jesus, His resurrection was the “sign from heaven” that authenticated His ministry (Matthew 16:1–4). The resurrection of Jesus Christ, attested to by hundreds of eyewitnesses (1 Corinthians 15:3–8), provides irrefutable proof that He is the Savior of the world.

Another reason the resurrection of Jesus Christ is important is that it proves His sinless character and divine nature. The Scriptures said God’s “Holy One” would never see corruption (Psalm 16:10), and Jesus never saw corruption, even after He died (see Acts 13:32–37). It was on the basis of the resurrection of Christ that Paul preached, “Through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin” (Acts 13:38–39).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not only the supreme validation of His deity; it also validates the Old Testament prophecies that foretold of Jesus’ suffering and resurrection (see Acts 17:2–3). Christ’s resurrection also authenticated His own claims that He would be raised on the third day (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34). If Jesus Christ is not resurrected, then we have no hope that we will be, either. In fact, apart from Christ’s resurrection, we have no Savior, no salvation, and no hope of eternal life. As Paul said, our faith would be “useless,” the gospel would be altogether powerless, and our sins would remain unforgiven (1 Corinthians 15:14–19).

Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25), and in that statement claimed to be the source of both. There is no resurrection apart from Christ, no eternal life. Jesus does more than give life; He *is* life, and that’s why death has no power over Him. Jesus confers His life on those who trust in Him, so that we can share His triumph over death (1 John 5:11–12). We who believe in Jesus Christ will personally experience resurrection because, having the life Jesus gives, we have overcome death. It is impossible for death to win (1 Corinthians 15:53–57).

Jesus is “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20). In other words, Jesus led the way in life after death. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is important as a testimony to the resurrection of human beings, which is a basic tenet of the Christian faith.

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Unlike other religions, Christianity possesses a Founder who transcends death and promises that His followers will do the same. Every other religion was founded by men or prophets whose end was the grave. As Christians, we know that God became man, died for our sins, and was resurrected the third day. The grave could not hold Him. He lives, and He sits today at the right hand of the Father in heaven (Hebrews 10:12).

The Word of God guarantees the believer's resurrection at the coming of Jesus Christ for His church at the rapture. Such assurance results in a great song of triumph as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:55, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (cf. Hosea 13:14).

The importance of the resurrection of Christ has an impact on our service to the Lord now. Paul ends his discourse on resurrection with these words: "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:58). Because we know we will be resurrected to new life, we can endure persecution and danger for Christ's sake (verses 30–32), just as our Lord did. Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, thousands of Christian martyrs through history have willingly traded their earthly lives for everlasting life and the promise of resurrection.

The resurrection is the triumphant and glorious victory for every believer. Jesus Christ died, was buried, and rose the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). And He is coming again! The dead in Christ will be raised up, and those who are alive at His coming will be changed and receive new, glorified bodies (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18). Why is the resurrection of Jesus Christ important? It proves who Jesus is. It demonstrates that God accepted Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf. It shows that God has the power to raise us from the dead. It guarantees that the bodies of those who believe in Christ will not remain dead but will be resurrected unto eternal life.

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