

“The Implications of the Resurrection of Jesus”

7 November 2021 - Led by Rev. Sam Mawhinney

Welcome & Call to Worship

Hymn of Preparation: Mighty to Save

Prayers of Adoration & Confession

Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:12-34

Sermon:

Example: Greta Thunberg: on climate change.

What you believe about something has implications for how you live? What you believe can be called your world view, your core beliefs, your ethics or your religion. Your beliefs direct your decisions, they drive our lives, and they affect us in every aspect of life from what we eat, what we buy, how we work, who we marry, what church we attend, how we deal with crises, how we face death.

Many people will try to influence our beliefs us for good or bad, advertisers, influencers on social media, parents, friends, politicians, in fact anyone.

The Apostle Paul has heard that some in the Corinthian Church do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus and therefore the resurrection of the dead. He is surely saddened, dismayed and shocked as he asks the question, *“How can some of you say there is no resurrection from the dead?”* (v12) Nor is he prepared to just let such a belief stay unchallenged. This is not simply an academic exercise for the believer, belief in the resurrection is an essential non-negotiable red line. There are enormous consequences for everyone, if there is no resurrection of the dead, and if Christ has not been raised (v13-14) then says Paul there are implications and he outlines these listing negatives in v12-19; positives in v20-28 and those that are immediate for the life of the Christian in v29-34. He concludes with a very strong exhortation to believe in the resurrection of Jesus, and the resurrection of the dead.

My prayer is Pauls defence will challenge us to a greater belief in the resurrection.

I. Negative implications of not believing in the resurrection of Jesus (v12-19)

- A. **Our preaching is useless.** (v14) At a funeral of a relative I sadly heard a minister who didn't believe in a physical resurrection preach on the stages of grief. It was useless, gave me no hope, didn't deal with the reason for death or the hope we have in death because of Jesus' death and resurrection. The gospel without the truth of resurrection is not gospel or good news and it is useless.
- B. **False witnesses** (v15) A doctor who gets his diagnosis wrong and tells you all is ok when it is not, even if not done deliberately is a terrible thing. Parents when your child lies to you it cuts to the heart of relationship, no trust can ever be built. If Jesus has not risen from the dead then we are liars and to insist in its truth would be the most shocking betrayal of trust and the worst type of false hope.

- C. **Faith futile** (v17) Keeping with the misdiagnosis and treatment analogy if both are wrong the patient will inevitably continue in their sickness and ill-health and march towards death. The patient trust in the treatment would be a futile experience of trust, the tragedy would be awful. The wages of sin is death and separation from God forever, faith in a God who could not raise the dead would be the most futile and tragic faith imaginable for the result is catastrophic and eternal.
- D. **The Christian (dead in Christ) is lost** (v18) When I conduct a funeral, I have used the truth we grieve with hope as a positive statement of what Paul says in 1st Thessalonians Ch 4:13. Sadly this week a family relative has died. She was a woman of faith and so we have hope, and grieve with hope because of the resurrection of the dead in Christ. BUT if Jesus has not risen and there is no resurrection of the dead in Christ then they are lost.
- E. **Christians are to be pitied** (v19) When I was a teenager a “friend” one of our “gang” said to me, I feel sorry for you, Sam, because you cannot do the things we do! Today is the International Day of Prayer for the persecuted church and our focus will be on the persecution of Indian Christians. The cost of discipleship is high, we renounce a lifestyle that is self-indulgent, the world hates us and often makes our lives difficult, and what sustains us is the hope that we will go to be with Jesus in heaven. If we live with hope that is a mistake, indeed we are to be pitied more than all of humanity. If we live our lives on a totally false premise and hope, we are to be pitied more than any other section of society. But because Jesus did rise from the dead, we will also be raised from the dead, (indeed we have already been raised).

II. Positive implications of believing in the resurrection of Jesus (v20-28)

Paul's statement in v20 announces with positivity that Jesus has been raised from the dead and he is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

- A. **Firstfruits (v20,23)** Now it is important to know that he uses the word fruit-fruits because it is a bible word that has a very special meaning. Israel was an agricultural society and harvest was important and as God's people they worshipped God and gave thanks for the harvest which he had provided through giving them the land, sun and rain. The details of what they were to do is given in Leviticus Ch 23:9ff So just as the harvest began, they would take a sheaf of grain and bring it to their place of worship the temple and wave it before the Lord which was called a wave offering. This was part of the Feast of Weeks. They counted from then seven weeks (50 days) which was the time for the harvest to be gathered in, then they worshipped God again in a public holiday when no work was to be done.

Paul uses this picture to make the wonderful point that Jesus is the first of the harvest of those who have been raised from the dead (v20,23) and then those who belong to him will be raised to eternal life when he comes backs again. The evidence for this is enhanced when we consider that the wave offering coincided with Passover, which in the NT is fulfilled in Jesus' death and resurrection, as John the Baptist prophesied, *“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”* (John 1:29)

The Israelites knew that the conditions to produce the first fruits would produce the harvest, and they were assured of its success and praised God for it, and they

worked hard and indeed rejoiced as they harvested. Psalm 126:4-6 Because Jesus died and rose again, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep then those who belong to him are assured that they will rise.

- B. A second Adam (v21-22)** Death came via Adam and in Adam all die because of inherited sin, this is referred to as the fall of man. Through a man all die. Similarly, through a man, Jesus Christ those who are “in Christ” will be made alive, because he did rise from the dead. (v22)
- C. The reign of Jesus (Lord) (v23-27a)** Jesus will come again and destroy every opposing reality, all dominion, authority and power and death the last enemy. (v24-26) Note how Paul uses scripture references to prove this is what is intended, that “everything will be put under his feet”. (v27-28) Psalm 110:1; 8:6
- D. The subordination of Jesus (v27b-28)** The great plan of salvation is completed, everything is handed over to the Father, “so that God may be all in all”. This is the glorious reality of heaven, Jesus has died, Jesus has risen, **(the first fruit, and the second Adam)**, the harvest of all those who are called and saved has been gathered in from the whole world (the church universal) Jesus has come back, all enemies are destroyed and Jesus hands over everything to God the Father and they are all in all, nothing in creation is in rebellion, all is in harmony and eternal life continues as it was always meant to be. **(Jesus reigns and everything is restored to the Father)** Eden is restored and filled with all of God’s people. If and only if Jesus has been raised from the dead, as indeed he has been (v20)

III. Present implications of believing in the resurrection of Jesus (v29-34)

Paul has been soaring, he has been speaking of future things and now he comes right back down to earth, and he examines some things that simply make no sense if there is no resurrection of the dead.

- A. Baptism for the dead (v29)** No-one is clear about what this is, the commentator Gordon Fee says there are at least 40 possibilities that have been proposed. As Paul Beasley-Murray says in his commentary “*The general consensus is that the most likely interpretation involves some kind of “viracious” baptism, baptism on behalf of those who have died.*” He quotes the early church father Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, who describes a practice found in the Marcionites, a cult group who held to dualism, “*when a catechumen (a person who receives instruction in the Christian faith to be baptised) among them dies, they hide a living man under the dead man’s bed, approach the dead man and speak with him, and ask if he wishes to receive baptism; then when he make no answer the man who is hidden underneath says instead of him that he wishes to be baptised, and so they baptise him instead of the departed.*”

It was probably a futile hope that baptism of another might be vicariously applied to the dead person. Paul does not criticise the practice explicitly, he simply makes the point baptism for the dead makes no sense if the dead are not raised.

- B. Why risk your life? (v30-32a)** Paul suffered a lot for the Christian cause, he did so in the hope of the resurrection of his life. For me to live is Christ to die is gain (Phil 1:21) says Paul from prison in Rome. He takes up his cross daily, he lives with the

constant hostility Satan, the world and the flesh, and if there is no resurrection such a life is pointless and without hope.

C. Why live a moral life? (v32b-33) I was walking through UCD this week, which I really enjoy as I have said. The new running track is taking shape it has a deep blue covering, you occasionally get to see the Leinster Rugby stars and I was handed free Pepsi Max (I did tell them I wasn't a student and was told to take two and I did) But I tell you of that walk because I passed a young lady who had a cloth shoulder bag which read, "Life is a bitch". Now there is a conversation starter for the Apostle Paul and for all who believe in the resurrection of Jesus. If there is no resurrection then life can be reduced to such a negative statement as was on her bag, it was even more negative than eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.

Paul realises that such a belief based on the fact there is no resurrection, no meeting with Jesus, no judgement leads to an immoral life, lived without restraint, and he urges those in the Church to not be misled, such people who live in error will lead you away from life eternal and salvation.

Paul's conclusion could not be clearer, denying the resurrection is both nonsensical and it is sinful. You do not know God and the truth about him, you are ignorant of God, and I say that to shame you into correcting your view.

Not believing in the resurrection of Jesus has catastrophic consequences and so Paul says BELIEVE!

Praise: In Christ Alone

Prayers for Others

Announcements

Closing Hymn: Because He Lives

Discussion Questions:

What are the consequences of denying the reality of the resurrection of the dead?

Paul speaks of the First Fruits and Second Adam. How do these help explain the implications of the resurrection for us?

How does the certain knowledge that death will be defeated give us the strength to live cross-centred lives for Jesus?