

## **WHAT'S THE POINT OF THE RESURRECTION?**

What's the point of the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

What's the purpose of it, the sense of it? What does it mean? Why did it happen? Why did Jesus Christ rise from the dead – and why should we care whether He did or not anyway?

In order to understand the point of the resurrection, we have to understand the meaning of death. For us to grasp the reason for the standing up of Christ's lifeless corpse as a transformed body that would live forever, we have to realize the significance of death in the first place. So that's where we'll begin.

### **Our Relationship with Death**

Death has impacted all of us. Each one of us has experienced the death of someone close to us at some point. Those experiences stand out clearly in our minds.

The first one I remember vividly was that of my father. He worked big, union construction jobs: shopping malls, universities, highway bridges, things like that. I was 13 when one day on a job site he suffered a heart attack for the first and the last time. I remember the police coming to our house to inform my mother. He was 49. When I turned 50 last year I realized that I had already outlived him.

Shortly after that my grandmother had a stroke. I came home from school one day to find her lying on the floor. She never recovered and just died a few days later.

We've all been touched by death – and I think we can all agree that there is something terribly wrong with it. Death, quite simply, is an awful thing. We can get used to the idea and learn to accept it, but we can't learn to like it. We enjoy life and death is an unwelcome visitor – an unwanted guest at the party. Death doesn't belong. Death is an intruder.

### **The Meaning of Death**

The first time the idea of death appears in the Bible is in the Book of Genesis and it is firmly connected to our God-given human ability to choose, to decide for ourselves what we want:

*Gen. 2:8-9 (NKJV) <sup>8</sup>The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. <sup>9</sup>And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

*Gen. 2:15-17 (NKJV) <sup>15</sup>Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. <sup>16</sup>And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; <sup>17</sup>but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it **you shall surely die.**"*

Notice this fact: God gave the man the ability, the capacity, to choose one thing over another. That decision was meaningful, as God fully informed the man of the consequences of his decision. God gave him the freedom; He gave him the power to choose life or death for himself. If the man were to choose the fruit of this one tree over the all the rest, including the tree of life, the man would surely die.

You know the story. Adam decided. He ate of that one tree. In so doing the man deliberately chose death over life. And then it got worse. The entire human race has followed in Adam's footsteps – as if everybody, in some respects, was now preprogrammed to do the wrong thing. The Bible tells us that:

*Rom. 5:12 (NKJV) ... through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, ... thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—*

In order to understand the point of the resurrection, we have to understand the meaning of death. Death is nothing more or less than the inevitable result of the sin we all have committed.

### **Exploring the Connection between Sin and Death**

In the biblical book of Deuteronomy, Moses put it like this, speaking to the people of Israel:

*Deut. 30:15 (NKJV) See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, <sup>16</sup>in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live...*

*Deut. 30:19 (NKJV) I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life...*

The people of Israel had the right to choose one thing over another. It's now a matter of historical fact that there came a time when they chose to ignore the warning of Moses – when they chose to ignore God. They chose evil over good, cursing over blessing. They chose death over life.

The same choice is at some point set before each individual – each one of us. And each one of us, sadly, grimly, at some point, at some conscious moment, chooses to sin.

To put it simply, like Adam, like Israel, we've all chosen to do the one thing we knew was wrong. We know the feeling of that realization. We've all been there and done that; we've got the dying body to prove it. We've chosen to lie, we've chosen to steal. We've chosen to envy. We've chosen to be bitter, we've chosen to hate. We've chosen in anger to hurt someone that loved us. We've done something we told ourselves we would never do because we knew it wasn't right, and ... we probably did it again. And ... maybe we even got away with it – for a while. Maybe then we convinced ourselves our particular sin wasn't really wrong. After all, we had a right to make that choice, didn't we? But do you see what we've really done? God gave us the privilege to choose ... and we've chosen to die!

Adam chose to die. Israel chose to die, and we – all of us – by sinning, have done the exact same thing. Now we're all trapped. Now we're all stuck with the consequences of that decision. Slowly but surely ... we're all dying. The psalmist put like this:

*Psa. 89:48 (NKJV) What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave?*

As we said before, "Death spread to all men, because all sinned." (Rom 5:12) And our sins have separated us from the God who loved us and gave us life in the first place.

*Isa. 59:2 (NKJV) But your iniquities have separated you from your God;  
And your sins have hidden His face from you...*

In order to understand the point of the resurrection, we have to understand the meaning of death. Death is nothing more or less than the inevitable result of sin. All of us have chosen to sin and, therefore, we've chosen to die. What do you think God's opinion is of that?

### **God's Opinion**

Fortunately for us, God was not happy with our first decision. He will certainly honor it, but He doesn't enjoy our misery. This present state of affairs is not to His liking. He wants us to realize that choosing death was wrong. He wants us to re-think that decision to sin. In the book of Ezekiel the prophet writes:

*Ezek. 18:32 (NKJV) For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore turn and live!"*

*Ezek. 33:11 (NKJV) Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die...?'*

So now we've pointed out the meaning or significance of death. We've established the connection between death and sin. We've made the point that God doesn't like the fact that we are all dying in our sins. And He would like us to agree with Him that death is awful. If we could only eliminate that stupid problem of our sin, we would strike at the root of our problem of death. Therefore, God would like us to focus on something truly brilliant: the remedy for sin that He has provided.

### God's Remedy

Isaiah expresses the thought in this manner:

*Isa. 1:18 (NKJV) "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD,  
"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;  
Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

*Isa. 44:22 (NKJV) I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions,  
And like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you."*

So here we are, dead in our sins, eternally separated from the God who loves us and gave us life, and there is nothing – nothing – that we alone can do about it. Happily, God is not limited as we are. God is, well, God; He can do something. And He says that He has devised a way to have those sins removed.

Before we can see the point of the resurrection, we have to understand the meaning of death. We have to see death's connection with sin. Now we can understand God's remedy. Now we can see the point of the death of Jesus Christ. His death was the remedy. His death was a sacrifice needed to pay the price for our sins.

### Christ's Sacrifice

We all understand the idea of a *sacrifice*. In baseball, for example, it's called a *sacrifice* when a batter allows himself to get thrown out so that another runner can advance.

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines a "sacrifice" as follows: It is "the forfeiture of something highly valued ... for the sake of someone or something considered to have a greater value or claim."

A person's life is one example of "something highly valued". Each of us values his or her life pretty highly. It's not easy to find something "to die for" in the literal sense. But Jesus Christ decided that His life was worth forfeiting for the sake of "someone ... considered to have a greater value or claim". That "someone" was you. He put you before Himself. He loved you and me, all of us, enough to sacrifice His life. He gave His life as a sacrifice for our sins. With this the Bible agrees:

*Eph. 5:2 (NKJV) ... Christ ... has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*

*Heb. 9:26-28 (NKJV) <sup>26</sup> ... but now ... [Christ] has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. <sup>27</sup> And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, <sup>28</sup> so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. ...*

*Rom. 5:8 (NKJV) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

So now we can understand what God meant when he said back in Isaiah:

*Isa. 1:18 (NKJV) "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD,  
"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;  
Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

*Isa. 44:22 (NKJV) I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions,  
And like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you."*

God has redeemed us. Christ has redeemed us. One definition of redeem is "to set free, rescue or ransom". Christ has paid the price of death to set us free, to rescue us, to ransom us, from the power of death. Unlike us, Christ was without sin. We chose to sin, but He took the consequences of our sin upon Himself. And this brings us back to the point of His resurrection.

### **Back to the Point of the Resurrection**

The psalmist, King David, speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit, foretold one important way that people would be able to recognize the Savior, the Redeemer, the Messiah when He came. The coming Savior was supposed to rise from the dead. The Scripture says:

*Psa. 16:10 (NKJV) For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.*

Now that's an important detail. The Messiah was to prove His Messiah-ship by rising from the grave. If I tell you that I love you and want to die in your place, take your sin upon myself, so that you might live eternally, you would have good reason to be skeptical. You would be right to remain unconvinced. For one thing, you may safely assume that I need to die for my own sin, so I have no life left to give for another. If I die, I'm just going to die – period. Expire. My hard drive will crash, once and for all. When I die you can safely expect me to stay dead. That would not help you one bit. Now let's compare that to the words of Jesus:

*John 10:11-18 (NKJV) <sup>11</sup>"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> ... <sup>15</sup> ... I lay down My life for the sheep. <sup>17</sup> ... I lay down My life that I may take it again. <sup>18</sup>No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. ...*

The Gospels also explain that...

*Luke 18:31-33 (NKJV) <sup>31</sup> ... He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. <sup>32</sup>For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. <sup>33</sup>They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."*

Now those early disciples of Christ didn't really grasp this. Then as now, outside of the random lunatic, people didn't go around saying they expect to rise from the dead every day. So this was more than they could handle. But very early that Sunday morning after His death...

*Luke 24:1-8 (NKJV) <sup>1</sup> [certain women] came to the tomb bringing the spices, which they had prepared. <sup>2</sup>But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. <sup>3</sup>Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup>And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. <sup>5</sup>Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? <sup>6</sup>He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, <sup>7</sup>saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'" <sup>8</sup>And they remembered His words.*

Later Jesus explained to His followers:

*Luke 24:44-47 (NKJV) <sup>44</sup>Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." <sup>45</sup>And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup>Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, <sup>47</sup>and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

So this is the point of the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

*1 Cor. 15:3-4 (NKJV) <sup>3</sup> ...that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,*

As Jesus said Himself:

<sup>46</sup> ... *“Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, <sup>47</sup>and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

So that’s the point of Christ’s resurrection. That’s what we’re here to celebrate. The Savior is risen. The price has been paid. God has given us another chance. We can make another choice. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is – without question – the very best thing that ever happened. Living for Jesus now is the best thing that we can ever do. The benefits will be eternal. We have been released from the consequences of our transgression, and nothing can ever separate us from God’s love.

*Rom. 8:31-35 (NKJV) <sup>31</sup>What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? <sup>33</sup>Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. <sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ...*

### **Responding to the Resurrection**

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is – without question – the very best thing that ever happened. Living for Jesus now is the best thing that we can ever do. But the Word of God also warns us saying:

*Heb. 2:3 (NKJV) How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?*

Maybe you’ve neglected; maybe you’ve ignored; maybe you’ve wavered regarding Jesus Christ, the one who died for you. Maybe you’ve counted the fact that He took your sins upon Himself an irrelevant, an unimportant thing. What do you think God now wants you to do? The same thing He always wanted: Choose life! Live for Jesus. It’s the only thing that’s going to matter in eternity.

God has no pleasure in the death of one who dies.

*Isa. 44:22 (NKJV) I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions,  
And like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.”*

*1 John 5:11-12 (NKJV) <sup>11</sup>And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. <sup>12</sup>He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

God wants us to say goodbye to our sins and believe that He has fulfilled His promise. Take the God who loves you at His word. God has set before you life and good, death and evil. Choose life! Live for Jesus. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the best thing that ever happened, but it requires a response from you. Respond to the resurrection. Living for Jesus is the best thing that you can ever do.

Prayer to Accept Christ as Lord and Savior:

Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and that I need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died for my sins when You died on the cross. I believe You rose from the dead. I want to turn away from my sins and follow You. I invite You to come into my life. I trust You as My Savior and respect You as my Lord. Thank You Lord, for hearing my prayer. Amen.