**16. Christ in His Resurrection**

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*The resurrection of Christ essential to all His work*. Just as the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ was a proof of His deity and Lordship, so also was His resurrection an indispensable evidence of the efficacious value of His death on the cross. Here again, one is faced with the absolute question of whether Christ is all He claims to be. If He did not rise from the dead, then He is not the Son of God; and it follows that His death on the cross is the death of an ordinary man and of no value to others. If, on the other hand, Christ actually rose from the dead, it not only demonstrates that He is indeed all He claims to be but that His work has the value set forth in the Scriptures, namely, a substitutionary sacrifice on behalf of the sins of the whole world.

It is for this reason that so frequently in Scripture the resurrection of Christ is linked with His work on the cross, as in Romans 4:25 where it states not only that Christ “was delivered up for our trespasses” but that He was “raised for [with a view to] our justification.” In like manner, the resurrection of Christ is linked to real faith in Him as in Romans 10:9: “Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” The resurrection of Christ and His substitutionary death are twin doctrines which stand or fall together.

As James Orr expressed it: “It seems evident that, if Christ died for men—in Atonement for their sins—it could not be that He should remain permanently in the state of death. That, had it been possible, would have been the frustration of the very end of His dying, for if He remained Himself a prey to death, how could He redeem others?”[1](https://bible.org/seriespage/person-and-work-christ-%E2%80%94-part-xvi-christ-his-resurrection#G63D11), It is significant that those who deny the bodily resurrection of Christ always also deny His substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

The resurrection of Christ has not only a backward look toward the cross demonstrating the power of God in salvation, but it is also the doorway to His present work in heaven. One of the important reasons for the resurrection of Christ was the necessity of a victory such as His resurrection as a prelude to His work in heaven.

Orr states, “The Resurrection of Jesus is everywhere viewed as the commencement of His Exaltation. Resurrection, Ascension, Exaltation to the throne of universal dominion go together as parts of the same transaction.”[2](https://bible.org/seriespage/person-and-work-christ-%E2%80%94-part-xvi-christ-his-resurrection#G63D12)

**At least a dozen important aspects of His present ministry were contingent upon the fact of His resurrection.**

1. ***Sending the Holy Spirit*.** The promise of Christ that He would send the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26 ; 16:7 ) was contingent upon His resurrection and His return to glory. The Holy Spirit was sent to continue the ministry of Christ which was, in a sense, suspended when He returned to heaven. As Christ expressed it in John 16:7: “Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you.” The major feature of the present age, namely, the ministry of the Spirit, is therefore dependent upon the validity of Christ’s resurrection from the grave and His return to glory as the triumphant, resurrected Savior.

2. ***Bestowing eternal life*.** Through the Spirit whom Christ sent to the earth, He is able to bestow eternal life on all those who put their trust in Him (John 11:25; 12:24-25 ). If Christ did not literally rise from the dead, God’s program of giving life for spiritual death through faith in Jesus Christ would become invalid. He is able to bestow eternal life in virtue of who He is and of what He has done in His death and resurrection. grave. It is because “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” His work as Advocate in turn depends on the fact that “he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

5. ***The work of Christ in intercession***. The resurrection of Christ is specifically linked with His work in intercession in which Christ presents His petitions on behalf of weak and tempted Christians and intercedes for them before the throne of grace. According to Hebrews 7:25, this ministry is dependent on His resurrection: “Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” His resurrection is necessary to His perpetual intercession.

6. ***The bestowal of gifts*.** According to Ephesians 4:11-13, Christ gives gifted men to the church such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. His work in thus bestowing gifted men upon the church is, however, dependent on the fact revealed in the preceding verses that “when He ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men (Eph 4:8). Now that He has “ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things” (Eph 4:10), an act, of course, which depended upon His resurrection, He is able to be sovereign in His bestowal of gifts and gifted men.

7. ***Impartation of spiritual power***. Just as the deliverance of Israel from Egypt was God’s divine standard of power in the Old Testament, so the resurrection of Christ from the dead is a divine standard of power in the New Testament, especially in relationship to His work for the church. It was because of who He was and what He was able to do that He could say in Matthew 28:18, “All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth.” This standard of power is described especially in Ephesians 1:17-23 where the apostle expresses his prayer that the Ephesian Christians might “know what is…the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places” (Eph 1:19-21). It was in virtue of His resurrection that He was able to send the Spirit who would be the channel through which the power would come according to Christ’s own prediction in Acts 1:8: “But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” It is as the Christian enters into the reality that he is in the risen Christ and a partaker of Christ’s victory over death that he is able to realize the divine power of God in his spiritual life.

8. ***The raising of believers to a new position in Christ*.** It is in keeping with Christ’s present work for believers that they are raised to a new position in Christ. According to Ephesians 2:5-6: “Even when we were dead through our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.” It is in virtue of the resurrection of Christ that the believer can now be triumphant in his new position, no longer being dead in trespasses and sins in Adam, but raised in newness of life in Christ Jesus.

9. ***Christ in His resurrection, the first fruits from among the dead***. In His resurrection from the dead, Christ fulfills the Old Testament anticipation in the feast of the first fruits in that He is the first to be raised from the dead in anticipation of the future resurrection of all believers, as stated in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23: “But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ’s, at his coming.” The resurrection of Christ, therefore, is the historical proof substantiating the hope of the believer that he too will be raised from the dead, in keeping with the prediction of Philippians 3:20-21.

10. ***Christ is now preparing a place*.** In the upper room, Christ told His disciples, “In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2-3). An important aspect of the present work of Christ stemming from His resurrection is that Christ is anticipating future rapture and resurrection of the church and is preparing a place for His bride in heaven. Here again, His present work would be meaningless unless it was supported by a literal resurrection from the dead.

11. ***His universal Lordship over all creation***. In Ephesians 1:20-21, it is brought out that Christ not only became Head over the church in virtue of His resurrection and ascension, but has resumed His position of Lord over all creation. Such would be impossible if He had not been literally raised from the dead as the One who had power to lay down His life and take it again.

12**. *Shepherd of the flock*.** In His death on the cross, Christ fulfilled the anticipation of Psalm 22 that He would die as the Good Shepherd for His sheep. In His present ministry, however, Christ fulfilled what is anticipated in Psalm 23 as the Great Shepherd who cares for His sheep. His present ministry is anticipated in a number of passages in the New Testament (John 10:14; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25). Yet to be fulfilled after His second coming is the fulfillment of passages relating to His work as the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:4).

***The future work of Christ also dependent upon His resurrection*. In a number of particulars, the work of Christ yet to be fulfilled in keeping with the prophetic Scripture also depends upon His resurrection.** Among these a number of facts can be cited.

1. ***The resurrection of all men***. It is anticipated in the prophetic Scriptures that Christ by the power of His own resurrection will raise the dead in a series of resurrections, probably in the following order: (a) the church at the time of the rapture (1 Cor 15:51-53; 1 Thess 4:14-17); (b) Israel and the Old Testament saints at the time of His coming to the earth to establish His kingdom (Dan 12:2, 13; Hos 13:14; Matt 22:30-31); (c) the tribulation saints at the time of His second coming (Rev 20:4); (d) the probable resurrection of millennial saints at the end of the millennium, though this is not mentioned in the Scriptures specifically; (e) the resurrection and judgment of the wicked dead at the end of the millennium (Rev 20:12-14). Regardless of time and character of resurrection, all resurrection is attributed to the power of Christ (John 5:28-29; 1 Cor 15:12, 22) and depends upon the historical fact of His own resurrection.

2. ***The marriage of the Bridegroom and the bride*.** At the time Christ comes for His church at the rapture, He will be joined to the church in heaven in keeping with the figure of the Bridegroom coming for the bride. This figure in the Scriptures speaks of the eternal union and fellowship of Christ and His church and is an important aspect of His future work, logically depending upon the fact of His resurrection from the dead. The church in the present age is a bride waiting for the coming of her husband (2 Cor 11:2; Rev 19:7).

3. ***The judgment of all classes of moral creatures*.** In addition to His present work of administering chastening and disciplinary judgments in the life of the believer, Christ will also be the final judge of all moral creatures, whether men or angels. These judgments can be itemized as referring (a) to the church (2 Cor 5:10-11); (b) to Israel nationally and individually (Matt 24:27—25:30 ); (c) to the Gentiles at the time of His second coming to the earth (Matt 25:31-46); (d) to angels, probably at the end of the millennium (1 Cor 6:3; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6); (e) to the wicked dead (Rev 20:12-15). There also are general references to the fact of judgment as attributed to Christ in His power demonstrated in His resurrection (John 5:22; Acts 10:42; Rom 14:10; 2 Tim 4:1).

4. ***Reigning on David*’*s throne*.** In the original prediction to David that his throne and seed would continue forever, it is implied that ultimately one would reign who would be a resurrected person. In ordinary succession of kings who ultimately would die, it is unlikely that the throne would be actually established forever as stated in 2 Samuel 7:16. The prophecy given to David has its confirmation in the announcement of the angel to Mary in Luke 1:31-33 where it was stated of Christ, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:32-33). The specific promise given to David, therefore, is to be fulfilled in Christ and could not have been fulfilled if Christ had not been raised from the dead. This is confirmed in Peter’s Pentecostal sermon in Acts 2:25-31 where the resurrection of Christ is tied in with the promise to David that God would set one of David’s descendants upon His throne.

5. ***The final deliverance of the world to the Father*.** As a climax to the drama of history, Christ delivers a conquered world to the Father according to 1 Corinthians 15:24-28. This ultimate victory and the establishment of the sovereignty of Christ over all of His enemies could not have been accomplished apart from His resurrection. This is predicted in 1 Corinthians 15:26, “The last enemy that shall be abolished is death.” The ultimate resurrection of all men as well as the ultimate subjugation of the entire world to the sovereignty of Christ depends upon His resurrection. It is not too much to say that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a link in the total chain of God’s sovereign program without which the whole scheme would collapse.

L.S. Chafer has summarized the importance of the resurrection in these words: “His resurrection is vitally related to the ages past, to the fulfillment of all prophecy, to the values of His death, to the Church, to Israel, to creation, to the purposes of God in grace which reach beyond to the ages to come, and to the eternal glory of God. Fulfillment of the eternal purposes related to all of these was dependent upon the coming forth of the Son of God from that tomb. He arose from the dead, and the greatness of that event is indicated by the importance of its place in Christian doctrine. Had not Christ arisen—He by whom all things were created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, He for whom things were created, who is before all things, and by whom all things consist (hold together)—every divine purpose and blessing would have failed, yea, the very universe and the throne of God would have dissolved and would have been dismissed forever. All life, light, and hope would have ceased. Death, darkness, and despair would have reigned. Though the spiritual powers of darkness might have continued, the last hope for a ruined world would have been banished eternally. It is impossible for the mind to grasp the mighty issues which were at stake at the moment when Christ came forth from the tomb. At no moment of time, however, were these great issues in jeopardy. The consummation of His resurrection was sure, for omnipotent power was engaged to bring it to pass. Every feature of the Christian’s salvation, position, and hope was dependent on the resurrection of his Lord.”[4](https://bible.org/seriespage/person-and-work-christ-%E2%80%94-part-xvi-christ-his-resurrection#G63D14)

***The resurrection a proof of the inspiration of Scripture*.** Like other important prophecies which have been fulfilled, the resurrection of Christ is another confirmation of the accuracy and infallibility of the Scriptures and a testimony to its inspiration by the Holy Spirit. The resurrection of Christ fulfilled many prophecies both in the Old and New Testament. Of importance in the Old Testament is Psalm 16:10 quoted by Peter in his Pentecostal sermon (Acts 2:27). As Peter points out, this promise could not have been fulfilled by David who died and whose tomb was known to them at the time of Peter’s statements. It could only refer to Jesus Christ whose body did not see corruption.

In the New Testament narrative, Christ frequently referred to His coming death and resurrection and these predictions again had their fulfillment when Christ rose from the dead (Matt 16:21; 20:19 ; 26:62 ; Mark 9:9; 14:28 ; John 2:19). The Apostle Paul in giving his testimony before King Agrippa affirmed that the heart of his message was that which Moses and the prophets had predicted, “how that Christ must suffer, and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:23). It is inevitable that anyone who denies the resurrection also denies the inspiration of Scripture and usually it is also true that those who deny the inspiration of Scripture deny the bodily resurrection of Christ. The two are linked as are many other important doctrines of Biblical faith. The fact of the resurrection of Christ remains a pillar of the Christian faith without which the edifice soon totters and falls. The resurrection of Christ is, therefore, to be numbered among major undertakings of God which include His original decree, the creation of the physical world, the incarnation, the death of Christ, and His second coming to the earth.

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**1** James Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 277.

**2** *Ibid*., p. 278.

**4** L. S. Chafer, *Grace*, pp. 272-73.

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