

The Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration

Lesson 8: The Provision of the Gospel

Statement 10. We affirm that the bodily resurrection of Christ from the dead is essential to the biblical Gospel (1 Cor. 15:14). We deny the validity of any so-called gospel that denies the historical reality of the bodily resurrection of Christ.

I. The Fact of the Resurrection

A. *Jesus' Prediction*

1. He uses the impending Temple destruction in Jerusalem to foretell his resurrection (Jn. 2:19-22).
2. Jesus insists he has authority to participate in his own resurrection (Jn. 10:17-18).
3. He plainly taught his disciples that he must die and rise again (Mk. 8:31).
4. Jesus states his resurrection would be the only sign that the Pharisees would get (Matt. 12:38-40).

B. *All Four Gospels Describe:*

1. Jesus' burial (Matt. 27:57-61; Mk. 15: 42-47; Lk. 23:50-55; Jn. 19:38-42)
2. The empty tomb (Matt. 28:5-7; Mk. 16:1-4; Lk. 24:1-2; Jn. 20:1-8)
3. The post-resurrection appearances (Matt. 28:9ff; Mk. 16:9; Lk. 24:13ff; Jn. 20:16ff)

C. *Additional NT Testimony*

1. *Acts*: 2:24, 31; 3:15; 4:10, 33; 5:30; 7:55-56; 9:1-9; 10:40; 13:30-37; 17:31
2. *Paul's Epistles*: Rom. 1:4; 4:24-25; 6:4-5; 7:4; 8:11, 34; 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; 9:1; 15:1ff; 2 Cor. 4:14; 5:15; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; 2:6; Col. 2:12; Philip. 3:10; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2 Tim. 2:8
3. *Hebrew Epistles and Revelation*: Heb. 7:25; 8:1-2; 9:24; 10:12; 1 Pt. 1:3; 3:21; Rev. 1:18

D. *The Empty Tomb*

1. The burial of Jesus gives evidence of the empty tomb, because:
 - a) the location of the grave was well known by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (both members of the Sanhedrin, Mk. 15:43; Jn. 19:38), the chief priests, Pharisees, Pilate, and guards (Matt. 27:62-66).
 - b) the Jews could have exhumed the body of Jesus to give evidence that the resurrection was a sham.
 - c) The disciples would never have become martyrs in preaching the resurrection knowing that Jesus' burial place could have unequivocally refuted their testimony.
2. The report of the guards testifies to the empty tomb (Matt. 28:11-15).
3. The gospel that Paul preached presupposes the empty tomb (1 Cor. 15:4ff).
4. Mark's empty tomb account is *very* early and most likely dated within a few years of the resurrection event. Hence, there wasn't enough time to elapse for a resurrection myth or legend to take hold.
 - a) Approximately 83% of Mark is in Matthew and Luke, suggesting that both Matthew and Luke used Mark as a source.
 - b) Mark never mentions the name of the High Priest, suggesting that Mark's audience knew his name (like our mentioning "the president" or "the governor").
 - c) External, historical sources tell us that Caiaphas was High Priest from A.D. 18-36 (Josephus, *Antiquities*, xviii.2.2; 4.3).
 - d) Jesus was crucified ca. A.D. 33. Therefore, Mark's Gospel was likely in circulation within a few years of the death and resurrection of Christ.
5. The disciples could never have preached in Jerusalem a resurrection of Jesus if the tomb were not empty.
6. The Jewish propaganda presupposes an empty tomb (Matt. 28:11-15).

II. The Nature of the Resurrection

A. *The Appearances of Jesus: “many convincing proofs”*

1. The NT records eleven separate appearances of Jesus in this order:
 - a) Mary Magdalene (Jn. 20:11-18)
 - b) Mary the mother of James, and Salome (Matt. 29:9-10)
 - c) The Two on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-32)
 - d) Peter (Lk. 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5)
 - e) The Eleven (and others, not Thomas) (Lk. 24:33, 36-43; Jn. 20:19-23; 1 Cor. 15:5)
 - f) The Eleven (with Thomas, Jn. 20:26-29)
 - g) Seven disciples (Jn 21:1-22)
 - h) The Eleven (Matt. 28:16-20)
 - i) More than 500 (1 Cor. 15:6; Lk. 24:44-49)
 - j) James (1 Cor. 15:7)
 - k) The Eleven (Lk. 24:50-52; Acts 1:6-9; 1 Cor. 15:7)
2. The NT also records three appearances of Jesus after his ascension: Stephen (Acts 7:55-56), Paul (Acts 9:1-9), John (Rev. 1:12-18).
3. The disciples thought they had seen a ghost, but Jesus insisted they were not seeing a spirit being (Lk. 24:36-43).

B. *The Resurrected Body of Jesus*

1. The resurrected body of Jesus was not entirely identical to his human body.
 - a) 1 Cor. 15:42-44 lists four essential differences between an earthly body and a resurrected body:

Human Body	Resurrected Body
mortal	immortal
dishonorable	glorious
weak	powerful
fleshly/natural	spiritual

2. Divine power did not merely resuscitate the body of Jesus from the dead, but transformed its very nature.
 - a) Paul did not say Jesus was a bodily spirit, but had a “spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:44), i.e., a physical body suited for the spiritual realm of heaven and empowered with new capacities. Note the distinctions between the material and immaterial appearances of Jesus.

Material	Immaterial
“They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him.” Matt. 28:9	“he disappeared from their sight.” Lk. 24:31
“As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them.” Lk. 24:15	“While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them” Lk. 24:36
“Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” Lk. 24:39	“when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them” Jn. 20:19
“and he took it and ate it in their presence” Lk 24:43	“A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them” Jn. 20:26
“When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.” Lk. 24:50-51	“He appeared to them over a period of forty days” Acts 1:3
“After he said this, he showed them his hands and side.” Jn. 20:20	“God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen” Acts 10:40-41
“Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.’” Jn. 20:27	
“On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.’” Acts 1:4	

“by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.” Acts 10:41
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3. Jesus’ post-resurrected state was not like his pre-incarnate state (without body), nor entirely like his incarnate state (fully human, albeit with spatial limitations), but profoundly transformed into a new physical existence with extended capabilities that did not include spatial/temporal limitations.
4. Where was Jesus before his ascension and between his appearances (during the forty days)?
 - a) Matt. 28:18 and Acts 2:32-33 suggests that the enthronement of Jesus begins with his resurrection.
 - b) The subsequent Ascension (Acts 1:7-10) is the visible outworking of this invisible reality.
 - c) Ergo, the resurrection marks the end of Jesus’ earthly, incarnate existence and the beginning of his spiritual, exalted existence to the right hand of God!

III. The Importance of the Resurrection

A. *Negatively*

1. The price of denying Christ’s resurrection is huge (1 Cor. 15:14-32).
 - a) Christian faith and preaching has no real value (v. 14).
 - b) The Apostles were really deceivers or sadly deceived (v. 15).
 - c) There would be no forgiveness (v. 17).
 - d) Believing loved ones who have passed on in death have, in reality, perished (v. 18).
 - e) Our endurance of hardships in hope of a better existence renders us “pitiful” (v. 19).
 - f) Hedonism is the only viable lifestyle to adopt (v. 32).

B. *Positively, the Resurrection means:*

1. Death does not have the final word. The resurrection of Christ assures us that we will some day be raised and that something better does indeed lie beyond our existence here on earth (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:54-57; Philip. 3:21).
2. Not only is our future resurrection guaranteed, but we will be reunited with our believing loved ones (1 Cor. 6:14; 1 Thess. 4:14).
3. The world is not merely a product of mundane principles of cause and effect, physical laws of nature, and social interaction of humans, but an open system where miracles of God are possible in history!
4. Our justification is guaranteed (Rom. 4:25; 1 Pt. 3:18-19).
5. We participate in a new quality of life empowered by the resurrection (Rom. 6:4-8; Eph. 1:18-19; Philip. 3:10).
6. Because Christ rose and ascended the bestowal of spiritual gifts for authentic Christian service empowers the Church (Eph. 4:7-10).
7. Christ’s resurrection demonstrates God’s power to transform history’s greatest injustice (the crucifixion) into its greatest good.

“Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits at God’s right hand in the place of honor and power. Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth. For you died when Christ died, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your real life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory” (Col. 3:1-4, *NLT*)