

BASIC INSIGHTS

Do You Know This Man? Session 4—*The Living God*

The following information is to help you get students thinking about the question, **What does Jesus resurrection mean for me?** and to drive home this one truth: **Jesus defeated death to give us purpose and hope.**

Note: An expanded version of Insights begins on the next page.

A. The resurrection gives us purpose.

- > Palestinian Jews believed in the future resurrection of the body.
- > 1 Corinthians 15:12-19. To doubt that Christ was raised from the dead would take away the hope that they had for the future.
- > If Jesus had not been raised from the dead then the message that they were preaching would be lying about what God did do and further diminish the hope they had in God.
- > Paul declared that without the resurrection of Jesus, the faith they held was not good for anything.
- > Without the resurrection of Jesus there was no reconciliation provided for and there would be no provision made for sin.
- > These doubts of resurrection for the future and of Christ came from those opposed to the message and purpose of Christ.
- > As a believer, our hope for today and for the future rests in the resurrection of Jesus.

B. The resurrection gives us hope.

- > 1 Corinthians 15:12-19. It gives us hope that the life we have been called to live is not in vain and because of His resurrection we too will one day rise from the dead to meet our Savior face to face.
- > The resurrection of Jesus gives us hope in that the message we share with others is true and is not to be discounted in any format.
- > We also have hope from the resurrection that the ultimate price that Jesus paid by giving His life did cover our sin and provided a way for us to be reconciled to God.
- > We can have great hope in the fact that God is who He says He is and the things that He has promised to those who believe in Him are true.
- > The resurrection reassures us that our sins have been paid for and a personal relationship with God is obtainable by all who desire it.

C. The resurrection guarantees eternal life.

- > 1 Corinthians 15:20-23. There are not a lot of guarantees in life; however, the resurrection of Christ guarantees each person who follows Him eternal life with God in heaven.
- > The term “firstfruits” came from harvest time. It originated in the Old Testament and implied that when the firstfruits of the harvest had been brought in that there would be a bountiful harvest that would follow.
- > The earliest fruits were the most costly to harvest and a greater sacrifice to give.
- > Comparing Christ to the firstfruits implies that there will be more of a harvest to follow. It is a guarantee that there will be a resurrection harvest to come and our faith and hope in Christ is not in vain.
- > Adam disobeyed God and as a result brought sin and death into the world. Christ obeyed His Father and as a result brought reconciliation and life into the world.

EXPANDED INSIGHTS

INTRODUCE THE TOPIC

Cemeteries are full of people from every walk of life and culture. To walk through a cemetery is literally a history lesson waiting to be learned. While cemeteries are not usually places where people plan to visit on their vacations, there are some that bring history to life. In the midst of a city that has buildings spanning over a thousand years, is a church where many notables are buried. In Westminster Abbey in London, you can walk into the rooms where kings and queens have been buried. You can walk over great composers of old and authors that span a century. There is more than just a sense of reverence in the building, there is also a desire to be able once again to hear their stories. To hear of great battles in their kingdoms and the inspiration behind the music would be extremely interesting. To hear them talk of everyday life and what it was like to walk the streets during those days could keep you on the edge of your seat.

Beneath Rome are catacombs dating back hundreds of years. While there are no names attached to the remains found there, you can't help but wonder what their stories were. Were they gladiators who died in battle? Were they Christians who died a martyr's death under the hands of a wicked emperor? Were their deaths the result of a plague that swept through the land?

Outside of Paris you can walk through the cemetery where thousands of soldiers who fought courageously against the evils of a dictator to defend our freedom are buried. Oh the stories they could tell of their fears and acts of heroism during those battles.

If any or all of them could come back to life just for a day, what would you like to know from them? What difference would it make if it were possible for that to happen? In this session we will focus on One who did come back to life and is still living today and the difference He has made because of it.

POINTS TO FOCUS ON

A. The resurrection gives us purpose.

The thought of someone coming back to life after being dead sounds like something out of a science fiction movie, but Jesus did rise again. Paul said that although several were teaching that bodily resurrection from the dead was impossible, how could they at the same time be preaching that Christ did rise from the dead. Read his challenge in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19:

¹² Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say, "There is no resurrection of the dead"? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; ¹⁴ and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is without foundation, and so is your faith. ¹⁵ In addition, we are found to be false witnesses about God, because we have testified about God that He raised up Christ—whom He did not raise up if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, Christ has not been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Therefore those who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. ¹⁹ If we have placed our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone. (1 Cor. 15:12-19)

The influence of pagan religions and philosophies had caused some in the Corinthian church to deny the resurrection of the dead. Most ancient religions believed in life after death, but the resurrection of the body was dismissed by many of them. Paul challenged their thinking—how could they believe Christ had risen (a prerequisite to salvation), yet believe there was no resurrection? Those were conflicting thoughts and caused a crisis of faith. If they were going to say there was no resurrection, then the logical conclusion would be that not even Christ had been raised from the dead. If that were the case, all hope was lost.

If Jesus had not risen from the dead, then one would have to ask what good was their faith? Paul declared in this passage that without the resurrection of Jesus the faith they held onto was not good for anything. Without the resurrection of Jesus there was no reconciliation provided for and there would be no provision made for our sin. If the resurrection of Jesus did not take place then Christianity would have no purpose. Everything they had hoped for and believed in would be of no use. All of those who had died believing in the hope and the resurrection of Christ would have simply just died and been buried. Paul made one final ar-

gument defending the resurrection of Christ: if we placed our hope in Jesus only for this life and nothing beyond, then we have lived life believing in all the wrong stuff and it was lived in vain.

As a believer our hope for today and the future rests in the resurrection of Jesus. Without that hope, without a resurrection, there is no purpose for us. The resurrection of Jesus provides a purpose for our life.

B. The resurrection gives us hope.

The fact that Christ did rise from the dead gives us a hope that cannot be replaced by anything else. It gives us hope that the life we have been called to live is not in vain and because of His resurrection we too will one day rise from the dead to meet our Savior face to face. Read Paul's words again:

¹² Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say, "There is no resurrection of the dead"? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; ¹⁴ and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is without foundation, and so is your faith. ¹⁵ In addition, we are found to be false witnesses about God, because we have testified about God that He raised up Christ—whom He did not raise up if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, Christ has not been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Therefore those who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. ¹⁹ If we have placed our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone. (1 Cor. 15:12-19)

The resurrection of Jesus gives us hope in that the message we share with others is true and is not to be discounted in any format. We can be confident in the fact that as Jesus rose from the grave and conquered death that His promise of eternal life is true. We also have hope from the resurrection that the ultimate price that Jesus paid by giving His life did cover our sin and provided a way for us to be reconciled to God.

The faith that we have in Christ gives us confidence. Without Christ, we could not have faith. If we claimed to have faith without the resurrection of Christ, what would be the point? Without a doubt the hope that we have as a result of the resurrection of Christ is a hope that is worth sharing with others. It is a hope that gives us confidence to know that Jesus is real. We can have great hope in the fact that God is who He says He is and the things that He has promised to those who believe in Him are true. The resurrection reassures us that our sin has been forgiven and a personal relationship with God is obtainable by all who desire it.

C. The resurrection guarantees eternal life.

There are not a lot of guarantees in life today; however, the resurrection of Christ guarantees each person who follows Him eternal life. That guarantee is still just as good today as it was that morning that Christ rose from the dead. Read Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23:

²⁰ But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. ²² For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; afterward, at His coming, the people of Christ. (1 Cor. 15:20-23)

The term "firstfruits" came from harvest time. There was great importance emphasized in the giving of those firstfruits back to God. The term originated in the Old Testament and implied that when the firstfruits of the harvest had been brought in that there would be a bountiful harvest that would follow. The earliest fruits were the most costly to harvest and a greater sacrifice to give.

Comparing Christ to the firstfruits implies that there will be an abundant harvest to follow. It will be a harvest of those who die in Christ and who will rise into a new life because of the firstfruits given by Christ. It is a guarantee that there will be a resurrection harvest to come and our faith and hope in Christ is not in vain. The cost of the firstfruits given by Christ were incredible and highly sacrificial, none that had ever been offered before. The result was a guarantee for all who will believe in Him.

Paul contrasted Adam and Jesus in this passage. Adam disobeyed God and as a result brought sin and

death into the world. Christ obeyed His Father and as a result brought reconciliation and life into the world. Christ had to rise first in order for those who follow to be able to be raised from the dead into everlasting life.

So, what does the resurrection of Jesus mean for you? It means that if you choose to follow Him and enter into a personal relationship with Him, you can have eternal life. It means that because Jesus defeated death, you don't have to. It means that we no longer have to wonder about our purpose in life. His resurrection gives us a secured hope for today and for the future.

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