

# Editorial: Reflections on the Glorious Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ

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This issue of *SBJT* is devoted to the theme of the resurrection and especially the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. From a number of different angles, both Old and New Testament, our authors reflect on the biblical teaching regarding the resurrection, Christ's resurrection, and its implication for our lives as Christians. At Easter time, much attention is given to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. But at other times of the year we often neglect detailed reflection upon our Lord's work and especially his resurrection. This issue of the journal seeks to remedy this lack of thought and reflection on such an important biblical and theological truth.

It goes without saying that the resurrection of Christ is at the heart of Bible, Christian theology, and the Gospel. Many places in Scripture remind of us of this fact but probably none so clear as the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (vv. 3-4), and a little further in the same chapter, "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith... And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is

futile; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men” (vv. 14, 17-19). Apart from the resurrection of Christ, Paul rightly argues, the entire Gospel message makes no sense, and the entire grounds of the Christian faith crumble.

Why is this the case? After all, prior to Christ’s resurrection other resurrections occurred in Scripture. In both the OT and NT, resurrections are rare but they did occur. No doubt, it is probably best to view these resurrections more as resuscitations since there is no evidence that those who were raised remained permanently alive. For example, in the case of Lazarus, our Lord raised him from the dead, but we presume that Lazarus would have died again as even now he awaits the final resurrection. So what makes Christ’s resurrection so unique and singular in importance?

The answer is not found merely in stating or demonstrating the mere historical fact of the resurrection, namely, that the Jesus who died on the cross was bodily raised on the third day since prior to Christ’s resurrection, other resurrections/resuscitations took place. Rather, the answer is that if one places Christ’s resurrection within the plotline of Scripture (which is what we must do), Jesus’ resurrection is presented to us in an entirely different category than previous ones. Instead of being like the resurrection of Lazarus, it is viewed as nothing less than *the* resurrection of all resurrections and the beginning of an entirely new creation order because, after all, it is *the* resurrection of the divine Son.

Proof of this assertion is not hard to find. In the storyline of Scripture, Jesus is presented as God the Son incarnate, or in the words of John, “the Word made flesh” (John 1:14). The reason for the incarnation of the eternal Son, the second person of the triune Godhead, is to save us from our sins (Matt 1:21) and to inaugurate a new covenant in his cross work on our behalf (Heb 2:5-18; 5-10). The Son took on our humanity for the purpose of paying for our sin, defeating the power of death, and accomplishing our eternal redemption. At the heart of the human problem is sin before God which results in death, and apart from payment of our sin and the defeat of death, there is no salvation. Due to our sin, first in Adam and then in all of us as members of the human race (Rom 5:12-21), death is viewed as an intrusion into God’s good world and the penalty of our rebellion against God (Rom 6:23). It is not until sin is paid for and death destroyed that God’s

new creation finally comes. In our Lord Jesus Christ, this is precisely what has occurred. This is why *his* resurrection is not presented as an ordinary one; rather it is *the* resurrection which inaugurates an entirely new order.

Furthermore, not only is Christ's resurrection viewed as the beginning of the new creation (2 Cor 5:17), it is also described as the firstfruits (1 Cor 15:20)—thus resulting in a new existence. As a result of Christ's resurrection, redemption is accomplished and his resurrection body now becomes the pattern of what we shall be, and what God intended for us from the beginning (see 1 Cor 15:42-44). In addition, it is due to Christ's glorious cross and resurrection (in biblical thought the two are inseparable) that death is not only destroyed and salvation is accomplished, but God's judgment is sure. Paul at Athens makes this clear as he proclaims that Christ's resurrection not only ushers in salvation but also judgment (Acts 17:31). The holy and righteous Creator of the universe will not let sin go forever unpunished; instead in Christ and precisely because of his resurrection, the triune God speaks with certainty to this poor, lost world: judgment is coming, the books are going to be balanced, and it will be done by the crucified and risen Lord of Glory.

In Scripture, the resurrection of Christ is no small thing, and that is certainly an understatement. The entirety of the Gospel depends on it: not merely the fact of Christ's resurrection as important as that is, but the *truth* and the *theology* of the resurrection. Christ's bodily resurrection in history means something specific in God's eternal plan and what it means is that Messiah Jesus, God the Son incarnate, is none other than the sovereign Savior, Redeemer, King, and Judge. May this issue of *SBJT*, in its focus on the theme of the resurrection, stir in all of us a recommitment to our great Redeemer, and a desire to live for him and to make him known. With the church of all ages, may it lead us to cry: So come, risen and exalted Jesus!