

## **The Resurrection: From Death Comes Life**

**By Ethan R. Longhenry**

This statement is paradoxical yet proves true in our lives. As one day, month, or year ends, another begins. A fire consumes a forest, and new growth is given an opportunity to rise. One creature is killed and eaten so that another creature might live. And so it is with Christianity and its teachings regarding the resurrection.

“Resurrection” involves the idea of coming back to life after death. In the Old Testament, the prophets Elijah and Elisha bring dead people back to life through the power of God (1Kings 17:17-24; 2Kings 4:18-37; Heb. 11:35). In the New Testament, Jesus raised the son of the widow of Nain, Jairus’ daughter, and Lazarus from the dead as well (Luke 7:10-17, 8:40-42, 49-56; John 11:1-45). In all of these circumstances, a person was physically dead and then brought back to physical life.

Yet every “new” day, month, or year will also pass away. “New” plant growth goes old and dies as well. Creatures who eat other creatures might be eaten in turn but will certainly meet their end in some way or another. All of the people above who were resurrected died again as well.

Yet God, in the New Testament, makes a promise regarding a better resurrection, one that does not end in yet another death. This resurrection is considered most properly as “life after life after death,” and Jesus is considered its “firstfruits,” the first of an intended many (1Cor. 15:20). We can gain understanding about this resurrection by considering the descriptions of Jesus’ resurrection in Matthew 28:1-17, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-53, and John 20:1-21:25.

Jesus died physically on the cross but remained alive spiritually in Paradise until the third day (Luke 23:43-46). As the Gospel accounts demonstrate, God raised Jesus from the dead on the third day: the tomb was empty, for Jesus’ soul/spirit were united again with His physical body. Over a forty day period Jesus frequently appeared to His followers, establishing that He was no phantasm but flesh and blood, although changed, since He apparently transcended the space-time continuum. He then ascended to heaven with the promise of returning as He departed (Acts 1:11).

In 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, Paul assures Christians that as Jesus was raised from the dead, so too will those who belong to Christ when He comes. According to the New Testament, Jesus will return one day (Matt. 25:1-46). When He returns, all of the dead in the grave will hear His voice and come out (John 5:28-29). This resurrection, by necessity, involves the re-animation and/or re-constitution of the physical body: that which was from dust and had returned to dust will begin to come to life again from the dust (Gen. 3:19). Since the “psychical,” or natural body, the one empowered by the breath (Gk. psuche) of life, is perishable, corruptible, and mortal, it will then be transformed to be the “pneumatical” or spiritual body, the one empowered by the soul (Gk. pneuma), and thus imperishable, incorruptible, and immortal (1Cor. 15:35-54). In this way the dead will rise first and those who remained alive will then be transformed (1Thes. 4:13-18), and such is the redemption of the body earnestly desired in Romans 8:18-25. From this point on the righteous will be forever in the presence of the Lord, having gained the final victory over sin and death through Him (1Cor. 15:55-58; 1Thes. 4:17-18).

From Jesus’ death comes life: spiritual life through faith in Him and the salvation which comes through His blood, and the promise of eternal life in the resurrection with Him (Rom. 5:6-11, 6:3-7). The resurrection changes everything: there is more to life than this existence, death and evil can be overcome, and we can maintain hope in the ultimate realization of God’s intentions for His creation. Through the resurrection life gains its meaning as preparation for eternity. Let us praise God for the hope of resurrection in Christ Jesus and place our trust in Him forever!

## **WDJD**

Some time ago, faithful Christians watched as the “WWJD” craze swept through the religious community. The bracelet-emblazoned theme “What Would Jesus Do?” was a fashion driven reminder to many people to imagine what Jesus would do when making choices. While it is appropriate to measure attitudes and decisions against the example the Lord set for humankind, it also must be understood that this is a highly subjective standard for directing one’s life. It fails to account for the individual’s personal desires, knowledge of the what the scriptures say about the Lord, the influence of others around him, and his own life experiences.

A more accurate and helpful question would be to ask: “WDJD—What Did Jesus Do?” That is the more important question, because salvation depends on it. Paramount among the remarkable deeds of the Son of God are the events described in 1Corinthians 15:3-4, “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

What Did Jesus Do? He took the suffering and guilt for our wrongdoing and paid our penalty. He died and conquered death so we could live. And the fact is, we will never be able to fully consider what Jesus would do until we have embraced what He did do for us on the cross. And when we have done that, it is critical that we read what the scriptures say about the other works of Jesus and practice them. What Jesus actually did is a better, far more objective guide than what any man subjectively thinks Jesus would do in present circumstance.

## **Ruperts**

In the June 6, 1944, D-Day invasion of Europe, an armada of Allied ships assaulted the beaches of Normandy, France. Simultaneously, thousands of airplanes dropped paratroopers into the action. Along with the paratroopers, the Allies also dropped hundreds of rubber dummies behind the enemy lines. Called “Ruperts,” these dummies were intended to simulate an attack to confuse the enemy. As the Ruperts landed, some German outposts were tricked into fighting the “paradummies,” creating a vital crack in the walls of Fortress Europe.

We accept that kind of deception as part of a legitimate military operation designed to thwart oppressive forces. What we should not accept is the deception Satan throws our way. Paul explained that the devil “transforms himself into an angel of light” (2Cor. 11:14), and his servants appear to be people who are promoting righteousness (v.15).

We must be alert! Our spiritual enemy would love to have followers of Christ distracted by false teaching and flawed doctrines of men. But as we keep our eyes on Jesus and the clear teachings of Scripture, our Lord can keep us aimed in the right direction. Don’t be tricked by Satan’s Ruperts. (B. Crowder)