

RISEN FROM THE DEAD

The physical resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central truth upon which Christianity is based. Because Jesus was raised from the dead and lives eternally, we as His children have the assurance that we too will be raised and will live with Him - both in body and spirit - in Heaven forever.

God has the power to raise the dead. In this short booklet, we will review the 10 indisputable instances found in the Bible in which He did just that. We will also preview the coming resurrections of all mankind. These chapters are based upon sermons that were preached by Pastor Russell Roberts during April 2017.

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Risen From the Dead - The Miracles of Elijah and Elisha

Originally Preached - 4/2/2017

Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken and done it," declares the Lord.'" - Ezekiel 37:12-14

Medical science defines physical death as the cessation of blood circulation and breathing, both of which are absolutely necessary to maintain life. Breathing and circulation work together to supply the cells of the body with life-sustaining oxygen. Without these two critical functions, human cells suffer damage and quickly begin to die. Despite this simple and straightforward definition, it is not always easy to determine if a person is actually dead. There are numerous examples of people who were declared dead, but were subsequently resuscitated.

The Bible defines physical death as the separation of one's soul from their body. The body is animated and becomes a living-being only when united with the soul. Thus, a person's physical life is dependent upon the presence of both both and soul. Even if the body itself stops breathing or the heart stops beating temporarily, it is still possible for a person to be revived naturally if the soul has not yet vacated. But once the soul has departed, it takes the supernatural work of God the bring a person back to life.

Whenever, the soul leaves the body it immediately goes to either Heaven or Hell where it remains for all of eternity. Only in the rarest of circumstances, and for reasons that transcend human understanding, does God choose to reunite a departed soul with its deceased body and bring a dead person back to life. Such an extraordinary act is a spectacular demonstration of God's power. Resurrection from the dead is one of the most captivating of all miracles.

There are 10 specific passages in the Bible that document people who were literally raised from the dead. Over the next few weeks we will examine these stories in detail as we consider the topic of resurrection. In each case, we will see the almighty power of God on display and be reminded that He alone is the LORD. We will begin this week with 3 episodes from the Old Testament that involve the prophets Elijah and Elisha .

I. THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH'S SON - 1 Kings 17:17–24

During King Ahab's reign over Israel, God called a prophet named Elijah. Seemingly out of nowhere, this strange and uncultured man rose to prominence. With great boldness Elijah confronted the wicked king and predicted that a severe drought would fall upon the nation. Just as he'd prophesied, the rain and dew ceased and the drought began. Elijah initially refuge at the brook Cherith, but after it dried up God sent him on to the city of Zarephath where he found lodging with a widow and her son. Elijah performed a miracle that provided the entire household with a continuous supply of flour and oil during the drought.

As time went by, the widow's son became critically ill and he died. The widow was devastated, and she blamed Elijah for her child's death. She accused him of bringing God's judgment upon her for past sins. Rather than getting angry at her, Elijah instead took the body of the young boy from the main house to his room upstairs and laid it on his bed. Then he stretched himself upon the body three times and cried out to the LORD asking that the child might live again. Hearing Elijah's prayer, God brought the son back to life. Elijah carried the risen child back downstairs and presented him to his mother.

When the widow saw her son was alive, she joyfully expressed assurance that Elijah was indeed a man of God. Her exclamation also revealed a certain assurance that his God - that is, Jehovah - was and is the LORD. This miracle squelched any doubts in this woman's mind about the reality and power of Yahweh. This story is the first clear example of a physical resurrection recorded in Scripture.

II. THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN'S SON - 2 Kings 4:18–37

Elisha the prophet frequently stopped in the town of Shunem during his travels. A prominent woman and her husband prepared a special place for him to stay on these occasions. God blessed her and allowed her to conceive and bear a son. He grew old enough to work with his father, but one day while he was out in the fields the boy developed a severe headache. The child was hastily taken to his mother, but she was unable to help him and the young man died.

Though Elisha was not present at the time, the grieving mother took her son's body to the prophet's room and laid him on the bed. Then she and one of her servants quickly set out to find Elisha. When she encountered him at Mt. Carmel, the woman pleaded with Elisha to come at once. Elisha sent his younger, faster assistant ahead of them with instructions for reviving the boy but ultimately the assistant was unable to do it. So when Elisha and the child's mother finally arrived some time later, the boy was still dead.

At this point, Elisha entered the room alone and closed the door. There he prayed fervently to the LORD. The aged prophet laid himself upon the deceased child, got up and paced around the room for a few moments, and then laid himself on the child again. The boy suddenly coughed seven times and his eyes opened. Elisha called the young man's mother who rushed up to the room and found her son alive and well. The grateful mother bowed before the prophet, but clearly it was God who raised the boy as a result of Elisha's prayer.

This story again declares the amazing power of Jehovah God. In this incident, the boy must have been dead for a rather lengthy period of time. Though these particular details are not disclosed, the distance from Shunem to Mt. Carmel has been estimated at 20 miles. Traveling by foot or on a donkey, this journey would have taken at least a few hours to complete as she would have had to go there and back. Furthermore, the adjectives used in this story describe the body as having grown cold, presumably due to natural death several hours before. Only God could accomplish such a wonderful miracle as this!

III. THE HASTILY BURIED MAN - 2 Kings 13:20-21

Some time after the prophet Elisha died, a group of men went out burying another person's body. Obviously, this person had been dead for quite a while since they were intending to bury him. Apparently they were in the same area where Elisha had been buried earlier. While they were in the process of preparing the new grave, a band of Moabite raiders approached them in the distance. Fearing an encounter with these marauders, they quickly tossed the man's corpse into Elisha's tomb instead of finishing the burial they'd began and then hurriedly fled the scene. When the unnamed man's body came into contact with the bones of Elisha - ie, his physical remains - the man revived and stood to his feet.

This resurrection account is interesting in that no prophet was actively involved. Elisha was already dead when this miracle occurred. There is no other indication that any other deceased person was raised to life after touching Elisha's bones. This is because the bones themselves were not responsible for the miracle, but rather the divine providence of God. By the working of His immeasurable might, this anonymous man was brought back to life. This event not only speaks to the godly character of Elisha, but also shows (at least in some small way) how the death of one man can bring life to another.

CONCLUSION

One of the recurring themes of Christianity is the belief in physical resurrection from the dead. Most famously, Christians profess that Jesus was executed, dead, buried, and 3 days later actually rose from the grave. With Easter only a few weeks away, you can be certain that we'll be studying this remarkable event in more detail soon. In the meantime however, it is fascinating to know that there are several other less prominent examples in the Bible of people being miraculously raised from the dead.

God alone decides who lives and who dies. It is He who determines when natural life begins and when it ends. The LORD alone has the power to give physical life and to take it, and on rare occasions to give it back again. As such, resurrection is always an act of God because only He has the power to affect it. Human doctors may declare a person to be dead, but ultimately the LORD is responsible for either causing or allowing death to occur. But don't fret... the same God who permits the physical death of people has the power to raise them up again!

Risen From the Dead - The Miracles of Jesus

Originally Preached - 4/9/2017

“For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.” - John 5:21

Last Sunday we began a 5-sermon mini-series that is titled “Risen from the Dead”. The theme of each of these messages is or will be resurrection. There are a few passages in the Bible that deal with visions or dreams of the dead being revived. There are a couple of episodes in which a person recovered after being injured so badly that they almost died. While these types of stories are closely related to our topic, our major focus will be limited to only those instances in which a person clearly and literally died and sometime later undoubtedly rose from the dead.

There are 10 examples of actual, indisputable physical resurrections recorded in the Bible. The first 3 are found in the Old Testament books of 1st and 2nd Kings. They involve, in some form or fashion, the famous prophets Elijah and Elisha. We went over these first 3 miracles in last week’s sermon. Interestingly, 2 of them dealt with children who had died - the widow of Zarephath’s son and the Shunammite woman’s son. The other concerned an adult - the hastily buried man.

Today we will move into the gospels - the 4 written biographies of Jesus’ earthly ministry. They tell us that after being baptized around age 30, the Lord began teaching and preaching throughout Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. His authoritative words were often accompanied by many miraculous acts of healing and other wonders. He calmed the seas, made the lame to walk, caused the blind to see, cleansed the lepers, and so forth. But did Jesus ever raise someone from the dead? The answer is absolutely “Yes”.

This morning’s sermon is called “The Miracles of Jesus”. We will go over 3 specific occurrences during Jesus’ earthly ministry in which He brought a dead person back to life again. This will bring our current total of resurrections discussed in this series to 6. Just like those we discussed from the Old Testament, 2 of today’s miracles will involve children or adolescents. This similarity is probably just a coincidence, but it is interesting to note that many of these resurrections were of kids. Perhaps that says something about the character of God and His regard for the young.

I. THE WIDOW OF NAIN’S SON - Luke 7:11–17

Jesus, His apostles, and a crowd of followers were nearing the city of Nain, a village about 6 miles southeast of Nazareth. As they approached the town's main entrance, they met a funeral march coming out of the gate toward them. This procession was bound for the cemetery, where they intended to bury a young man who had died. The deceased male is never called a boy or child in this story, and therefore was possibly a teen or youth that had been living at home when he died. Regardless of his exact age, the young man's mother was a widow who'd already lost her husband and now was about to bury her only son. As expected, she was absolutely devastated and stricken with grief.

Seeing the weeping mother, Jesus felt deep compassion for her and told her not to cry. He approached those who were carrying the coffin, reached up and touched it, and they came to a stop. The Jews rarely used actual coffins, and most scholars believe this was a pallet upon which the young man's linen-wrapped body laid. Jesus said "Arise" and the young man sat up and began talking. Jesus then presented the resurrected son to his mother.

Following this miracle, the people present began glorifying God and calling Jesus a great prophet. The news of what Jesus had done spread quickly throughout the region. His fame increased as more and more people realized that Jesus had the power to raise the dead.

II. JAIRUS' DAUGHTER - Matthew 9:18-26, Mark 5:21-43, Luke 8:40-56

One day while Jesus was preaching to crowds of people by the seashore, an official from the local synagogue named Jairus came up to Him. Broken, he fell at the Lord's feet and begged Him to come and heal his ailing twelve-year old daughter who was near death. Touched by the father's desperate plea, Jesus joined Jairus and the two of them started off towards the official's house followed by the large crowd. As they were going, one of Jairus' servants encountered them and informed them that it was too late - the girl had already died. He told Jairus to let Jesus go and bother Him no more.

But instead of giving up, Jesus dismissed the crowd and continued to the house with only Peter, James, and John. When He arrived, another large crowd was already gathered there lamenting the death of this child. Jesus told them not to worry because the girl was not dead but sleeping, and they all scoffed at His naivety. Undeterred, the Lord cleared the crowd out and then took His three apostles along with the girl's parents into the room where their daughter's body was. He told the little child to "Get Up". Immediately she rose from her bed and began walking around the room. Again, the news of this miracle spread throughout the countryside.

We should clarify that the little girl in this story was literally dead - not merely sleeping. They would not have attempted to call off the rescue if they were not sure she was dead. Imagine your child was gravely ill and you called for an ambulance. Would you then seek to intercept it and tell it not to come unless you were absolutely certain it was no longer necessary? Surely not. The various accounts of this story told in Matthew, Mark, and Luke confirm her death. Jesus knew she was not merely sleeping, but He also knew that He had the power to resurrect her. In the Lord's eyes, physical death is like sleep because He knows that we will live again.

III. JESUS' FRIEND LAZARUS - John 11:1-44

Jesus was close friends with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. These 3 siblings lived in Bethany, a small town near Jerusalem. One day, Jesus and His disciples received an urgent message from the two sisters that their brother Lazarus was critically ill. To the surprise of many, Jesus did not immediately stop what He was doing. Rather, He continued ministering in the place that He was for 2 more days before departing to Bethany. While He tarried, His friend Lazarus died.

By the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus had already been in the tomb for 4 days. As He approached the city, Martha hurried out to meet Him. She expressed frustration with Jesus, stating that if He had only come sooner Lazarus would not have died. Not long thereafter, Mary also came to Jesus and declared her similar disappointment in Him. The sisters were both in great grief and mourning. Jesus was moved with compassion and began to weep. Jesus then asked where the body of Lazarus had been laid, and they led Him to the tomb.

When they got there, Jesus asked some members of the crowd to remove the stone from the tomb's entrance. Martha initially objected because she supposed that the remains inside had already begun to decay and emit a foul odor. Martha did not want her brother's grave to be defiled. But Jesus insisted, so the stone was moved out of the way. After speaking with the God the Father quietly for a few moments, Jesus addressed the crowd and loudly cried out "Lazarus, come forth!" Immediately, Lazarus came walking out of the tomb alive but still wrapped from head to toe in his burial clothes. Jesus ordered that he be unbound and released.

News of this miraculous resurrection quickly spread to nearby Jerusalem where the Pharisees and chief priests heard what had happened. Upon learning what Jesus had done, they quickly convened a meeting in which they began plotting Jesus' death. They were determined to get rid of this threat to their religion once and for all.

CONCLUSION

We began this series on resurrection by stating that only God has the power to bring the dead back to life. In last Sunday's message both Elijah and Elisha earnestly prayed for God to intervene, and the resurrections that subsequently occurred were attributed to the LORD alone. But did you notice in today's stories that Jesus did not formally seek God the Father's assistance, but rather He acted on His own authority and by His own power. What does this important observation tell us?

Seeing that only God can raise the dead, and knowing that Jesus Himself raised the dead on multiple occasions, we must then conclude that Jesus is God in the flesh. This is the only logical explanation for Jesus' divine power and authority. The 3 miraculous resurrections that He performed, which we briefly examined today, are unmistakable evidence of His deity.

Next week is Easter Sunday, the day upon which Jesus personally rose from the grave. This is the pinnacle event of Christianity. I hope you will join us as we talk about the Lord's crucifixion and the empty tomb. Until then, may His blessings be upon you.

Risen From the Dead - The Resurrection of Jesus

Originally Preached - 4/16/2017

“For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.” - John 10:17-18

This morning is Easter Sunday. Today we recognize and remember the most important event in all of human history - the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Just as God had promised since the creation of the world, Jesus our Saviour came to this earth and gave His life as the sacrifice for sins. On the cross He bore the penalty that we deserved - the full wrath of God, and there He died for our sins. After His death, the Lord was buried in a borrowed tomb. But death could not hold Him, and just as He'd foretold, three days later Jesus rose from the grave!

Over the past two weeks, we have briefly reviewed the 6 different physical resurrections recorded in the Bible that took place prior to Jesus' crucifixion. If you were with us for those messages, perhaps you remember these miraculous events. They are listed below:

The Widow of Zarephath's Son
The Shunammite Woman's Son
The Hastily Buried Man

The Widow of Nain's Son
Jairus' Daughter
Lazarus of Bethany

Today we will focus on the resurrections that occurred in the days following the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Did you notice that I said resurrections - plural? While most people have heard the story of Jesus' resurrection, many are not aware of the many others that took place around the same time. These two resurrection events will be the topic of this message.

Before we begin... let's take a brief look ahead. Next week we will study about 2 additional instances in which a person was raised from the dead during the early years of the New Testament church. Then, two weeks from today we will conclude this short sermon series with a discussion of the future resurrections of the righteous and the unrighteous. These promise to be enlightening messages, but for now let's turn our attention to the crucifixion and glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus arrived in Jerusalem on the Sunday before Passover. He was welcomed by the people of the city as He rode in on the back of a donkey. Over the next few days, He preached and taught the crowds of people who gathered in the temple. He confronted and rebuked the chief priests and Pharisees, who were already secretly plotting to kill Him. On the evening of the Passover, Jesus and His disciples met in an upper room to observe the Passover Meal. Following the supper, Jesus went out to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray.

Later that night a band of men armed with clubs and swords came to arrest Jesus. They had been sent by the chief priests and elders, and were led by Judas Iscariot - the disciple who betrayed the Lord for 30 pieces of silver. After His arrest, these men took Jesus to the home of the high priest. Throughout the remainder of the night and into the early morning Jesus underwent 6 separate trials - each one a travesty of justice. Finally, the Roman governor Pilate sentenced Jesus to death by crucifixion. After being scourged, Jesus was forced to carry His own cross to Calvary. There He was crucified between two common criminals. After about 6 hours on the cross, Jesus cried out with a loud shout and then died.

I. CERTAIN OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS - Matthew 27:50-53

At the exact moment of Jesus' death, the earth began to shake and rocks began to split open. The veil of the temple, separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place, was torn in two from top to bottom. But something else happened... something strange and less well known. The tombs of many Old Testament saints were opened. In other words, the entrances of numerous caves, tombs, and/or sepulchres were unblocked. Inside these graves laid the bodies of Old Testament believers, some who had been dead for hundreds of or even a few thousand years.

These tombs remained open for a few days, during the period when Jesus himself was buried. But following the resurrection of Jesus, many of these Old Testament saints - not all - were raised to life and actually went into the city of Jerusalem. There they were seen by many people. The Bible does not elaborate on how long these risen saints lingered in the city. My guess is that they ascended into Heaven sometime following Jesus' ascension, seeing that He is the called the first fruits. Jesus led the righteous who had been waiting in Abraham's Bosom to the present Heaven, meaning that He must have preceded these saints in their arrival there.

The physical resurrection of some of the Old Testament saints is a precursor to the physical resurrection of all believers that will occur sometime in the future. We will focus on this more during the final sermon in this series. While the tombs were opened on the day the crucifixion, it appears that these saints did not actually come back to life until after Jesus rose from the grave. Most of the resurrection accounts found in the Bible deal with a single person, but this event includes an unknown number of believers who all rose from the dead simultaneously. Amazing!

II. JESUS CHRIST - Matthew 28:1-8, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-9, John 20:1-18

Following His death, and the aforementioned earthquake, some of Jesus' followers were granted permission to bury His body. His lifeless corpse was taken down from the cross and given to them. These disciples hurriedly wrapped His body in linen clothes and placed Him in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. This had to be done in a rush, because it was already late afternoon and the Sabbath day began at sunset. Jews were not allowed to do any work on the Sabbath. Out of necessity Jesus was entombed quickly, and the ladies who'd helped wrap His body that evening planned to come back after the Sabbath to complete their preparations more thoroughly.

Fearing that Jesus' disciples might move His body and claim that Jesus had arisen, the next morning the chief priests and Pharisees convinced the Romans to place guards at the tomb. Furthermore, they had the stone in front of the tomb sealed to ensure that no one could come out or get in. Meanwhile, somewhere in the city Jesus' heartbroken disciples huddled together distraught and mourning the loss of their Lord. The Sabbath day came and went.

Early on the morning of the next day - the first day of the new week, the women took spices and headed back to the tomb where Jesus laid. They fully intended to finish Jesus' burial preparations just as they'd planned two days earlier. They had no idea that the tomb had been sealed shut and was being protected by armed soldiers. If they had known this, they probably would not have gone at all. Yet, when they arrived something miraculous had taken place. They found the stone was rolled away from the entrance, and the tomb empty. The guards had already fled. An angel appeared to them and explained that Jesus had risen from the dead, just as He'd promised.

Following the resurrection, there were multiple instances in which Jesus appeared to His followers. The exact number of these appearances is disputed by scholars, but suffice it to say that there were several. Over the course of the 40 days after the resurrection, the risen Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, the other women, a couple of disciples on the road to Emmaus, Peter and the apostles (more than once), His brother James, and large crowds of disciples numbering up to 500 people. All of these men and women became eyewitnesses of the physical and literal resurrection of Jesus Christ!

CONCLUSION

The resurrection of Jesus and the resurrections of several Old Testaments saints immediately thereafter are the seventh and eighth Biblical examples in our “Risen from the Dead” sermon series. However, the resurrection of Jesus is unlike all of the others that we’ve studied previously or will study in the coming weeks. Only Jesus correctly predicted His own resurrection before it happened and only Jesus rose never to die again.

Jesus did not die of natural causes like sickness or old age. In fact, not even His executioners were able to take His life. Jesus voluntarily gave it as a sacrifice to pay for mankind’s sin. It is correct to say that our sin killed Jesus. Whatsmore... Jesus was not raised in order to go on living on the earth like other men. It wasn’t to offer Him a second chance at life. Rather, His resurrection accomplished complete victory of sin and the grave. The resurrection of Jesus makes the salvation of man possible!

Unfortunately, most Christians today tend to place more emphasis on the cross than on the empty tomb, but not so in the New Testament. The early church knew full well that the crucifixion alone was powerless to save apart from the resurrection. Salvation involves both a death to one’s old self and a resurrection to new life. This is made possible only through the miraculous work of Christ - His death and resurrection.

Risen From the Dead - The Miracles of Peter and Paul

Originally Preached - 4/23/2017

And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; the promise to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve God night and day. And for this hope, O King, I am being accused by Jews. Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead? - Acts 26:6-8

There are several examples of physical resurrections from the dead recorded in Scripture. Over the past three weeks we have read about and discussed eight separate instances in which a person who had died was brought back to life. Some of these people were children, while others were adults. The causes of their deaths differed, as well as the circumstances in which they were raised. Some of these individuals had only been dead for hours, while others had been dead for a few days, and still others for hundreds of years. Each resurrection story has been uniquely different and fascinating, and we are not done yet...

This morning, in our fourth sermon of the "Risen from the Dead" series, we will add another two Biblical examples of physical resurrections to our list. We have already covered the occurrences of resurrection detailed in the Old Testament and in the Gospels. Today we will move into the history of the early church as recorded in the book of Acts. Here we will find a couple of new resurrection stories that we've not yet considered. These helped to establish God's presence and power through the apostles during the foundational years of the New Testament Church.

We will also briefly mention a possible third resurrection that is found during this crucial period of history in which Christianity began. Because we cannot be absolutely certain about the details, this particular story will not be formally included in our list of resurrections. The Bible isn't clear enough to definitively state that this was indeed a physical resurrection from the dead, but as you will see, it potentially could have been one.

The miracles we will discuss this morning will involve the apostles Peter and Paul. Both of these men actually saw the risen Jesus - Peter on the day of His resurrection and over the 40 days leading up to His ascension, and Paul on the road to Damascus. God used these two great men, just like He had used Elijah and Elisha during the Old Testament, to raise certain dead people back to life.

I. THE KIND WOMAN TABITHA - Acts 9:36-42

Tabitha was a caring, compassionate Christian woman who served in a variety of ways to help the less fortunate in her community. She lived in the small city of Joppa, which was located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. She was a seamstress, and one of her ministries was to make garments and clothing for the widows. She was held in high regard and loved deeply by those around her. The Bible refers to her both as Tabitha, her Hebrew name, and also Dorcas, her Greek name. Tabitha and Dorcas are the same person.

For reasons unknown, Tabitha became ill and died. Her lifeless body was washed and then laid in an upper room. It just so happened that the apostle Peter was ministering at the time in the nearby city of Lydda. Knowing that he was closeby, after Tabitha's death two disciples were sent from Joppa to go and find Peter. When they encountered Him, these men asked Peter to come with them to the place where Tabitha's body had been laid. Peter readily agreed and quickly made the short trip to Joppa.

When he arrived, Peter met a crowd of grieving mourners. They told him about the kindness of Tabitha and all that she had done for them while she was still living. Peter cleared everyone out of the upper room. Alone with the body, he knelt down and prayed. Then he turned to the body and said, "Tabitha, arise." Miraculously, she opened her eyes and sat up. Peter then presented her alive to all of the saints and widows gathered outside. News of the resurrection spread, and many people became believers as a result.

II. THE YOUNG MAN EUTYCHUS - Acts 20:7-12

Near the end of his third missionary journey, the apostle Paul stopped to spend a week in the city of Troas. Troas was located near the northwestern tip of Asia Minor, or modern-day Turkey, and was an important port on the Aegean Sea. Paul had been through the city on several occasions previously and was well-known by its residents. While there, Paul and several of his colleagues met with and encouraged many of the believers.

On Sunday evening, while they were all gathered together for fellowship, Paul began to preach to them. He and his team planned to depart the next day, so Paul prolonged his message and continued speaking into the night. Because it was past dark, many lamps were lit in order to illuminate the upper room where these disciples had gathered. A young man named Eutychus sat in a window sill listening to message that was being proclaimed. After a while, he became drowsy and fell asleep.

Unconscious, the young man slipped out of the window and fell three stories to his death. It is important to note that Luke, a medical doctor and companion of Paul, was one of the men present when this occurred. As a matter of fact, it is Luke who wrote the book of Acts in which this story is found. As such, when Luke states that the Eutychus was dead we can trust his expertise as a doctor - the boy was dead. Nevertheless, Paul went downstairs and laid himself on the young man's dead body. Incredibly, Eutychus came back to life, went back upstairs, and enjoyed a meal with the believers gathered there. At daybreak Paul and his companions left, but the disciples who remained in Troas were greatly comforted because Eutychus had risen.

I have heard some pastors cite this story as a warning to all of those who sleep during the sermon, but I won't go there... I've also heard some congregations cite this story as a warning to pastors that preach too long, but I won't go there either...

III. THE POSSIBLE RESURRECTION OF PAUL - Acts 14:19-20

During his first missionary journey, Paul came to the predominantly Gentile village of Lystra, accompanied by his fellow missionary Barnabas. Apparently, there was no synagogue in Lystra so Paul preached in other places. While there he healed a man who'd been lame since birth, and the people were so amazed that they thought Paul was a god. They began to worship him, and desired to offer sacrifices to him, so Paul tried to restrain and correct their misguided actions.

Meanwhile, some Jews from the nearby cities of Antioch and Iconium arrived and stirred up the crowd against Paul. Confusion and chaos ensued, until finally the mob drug Paul out of the city and stoned him. They left his battered body where it laid and returned home, supposing Paul to be dead. Apparently his disciples agreed, seeing that afterward they just stood around the body without trying to render any aid. Incredibly, after a short while, Paul got up and went back to work.

As stated in the introduction, we cannot be certain that this was an actual resurrection. The Bible never directly states that Paul actually died. For this reason, we can not and do not include it as an explicit example of someone who was raised from the dead. However, it may have been one. Afterall, who gets up immediately after being stoned and walks back nonchalantly into the city? And how could someone who'd been pelted with rocks so badly that they were thought to be dead be able to travel by foot several miles on the very next day? Certainly, if not a full blown resurrection this was at minimum a remarkable healing!

CONCLUSION

While the aftermath of Paul's stoning is debatable, there is absolutely no doubt that both Tabitha and Eutychus were literally raised from the dead. When we add these to our list, it brings the total number of physical, bodily resurrection stories found in the Bible to ten. They include the widow of Zarephath's son, the Shunammite woman's son, the hastily buried man, the widow of Nain's son, Jairus' daughter, Jesus' dear friend Lazarus, Jesus himself, certain Old Testament saints, the kind woman Tabitha, and the sleepy young man Eutychus.

Each of these stories speak to the power of Almighty God. In today's message we've discovered how the LORD worked through two apostles - namely Peter and Paul - to provide credibility to the early church. These two men, followed by many others who continued in their footsteps, boldly and sacrificially carried the message of Jesus far and wide, and as a result the world has never been the same.

Next week we will conclude this series with a message about the future resurrections of the righteous and the unrighteous. You don't want to miss it. We will see you then.

Risen From the Dead - The Future Resurrections

Originally Preached - 4/30/2017

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. - Hebrews 9:27-28

The Bible teaches that every person who is apart from Christ is spiritually dead as a result of their own sin. If and when any person places their faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior, they are brought to life spiritually by the saving power of God. In this way, every conversion experience is in essence a spiritual resurrection - a death to the old sinful, carnal self followed by a resuscitation to new life through the grace of almighty God. This unseen resurrection is what Christians symbolize through the practice of baptism.

While this spiritual reality is important for believers to recognize and understand, the theme of this current sermon series has been on physical resurrections. Does the Bible have anything to say regarding this? Will there be a literal, bodily resurrection of Christians someday? What about non-Christians? If there will be, when will these future resurrections take place? What will be the end result of these resurrections?

This morning, in the final sermon of our series "Risen from the Dead", we will examine the future resurrections of the righteous and the unrighteous. While there are only 10 definitive examples of physical resurrections that took place during historical period covered by the Bible, Scripture states that someday every person who has ever lived will physically rise from the dead. Can you imagine? There will be literally billions of resurrections!

I. TWO FUTURE RESURRECTIONS - John 5:28-29

Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. - John 5:28-29

The Bible repeatedly teaches that there will be two great future resurrections. The first of these is called the resurrection of the righteous and the second is called the resurrection of the unrighteous. These two events will occur during the end times.

Every person will be physically raised from the dead - either in the first or the second resurrection... but not both.

The resurrection of the righteous will include all people who have placed their faith in God for salvation. This will include those who lived before Jesus yet trusted in the saving power of the coming Messiah (the Old Testament saints), and those who have lived after Jesus that have accepted Him as the Lord and Savior (the Church). The righteous will be raised physically and given glorified, imperishable bodies. Following this resurrection, the righteous will dwell - in both body and spirit - with the LORD in Heaven for all of eternity.

The resurrection of the unrighteous will include all people who have rejected salvation. This will include everyone who has not placed his or her dependent faith in God - either in the hope of a coming Messiah (Old Testament) or in the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ (New Testament). All unredeemed, unrighteous people will also be physically raised and given imperishable bodies. Following their resurrection, these will be cast bodily into the lake of fire - aka, Hell - where they will suffer under judgment forever.

II. THE RESURRECTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS

The resurrection of the righteous will take place in various phases. It began with the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is called the “firstfruits” of those who have been risen. It was previewed on a small scale by the resurrection of certain Old Testament saints, an event which immediately followed Jesus’ resurrection. We’ve already discussed both of these spectacular miracles in an earlier sermon during this series. These make up the first and second phases of this resurrection.

A. AT THE RAPTURE - 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. - 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

The third phase of the resurrection of the righteous will take place at an event called the rapture. Jesus will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the with the trumpet of God. The dead in Christ will rise from their

graves to meet the Lord in the air. Immediately thereafter, those Christians who are still alive at the time of His coming will be caught up also to meet the Lord in the air. Together, they will all return physically in their glorified bodies with Jesus to the present Heaven.

Those resurrected and taken during the rapture will include only the Church - ie, those who have accepted Jesus as their Savior during the Church Age. As a reward for their faithful obedience, Christians will not have to endure the 7-year tribulation that will follow the rapture. The terrible atrocities that will take place during the Tribulation are intended as a punishment upon the world for rejecting Jesus. As such, the Church will be spared from this misery. Following the Tribulation, the Church-Age Christians will return physically with Christ at His second coming.

B. AT THE SECOND COMING - Revelation 20:4, Daniel 12:1-2

Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. - Revelation 20:4

During the Tribulation, many people will place their faith in Christ. Despite the absence of God's church and its influence, there will be people who realize the error of their ways and who turn to the LORD in repentance. They will resist the pressures of the anti-Christ. Most of these Tribulation Saints will be killed for accepting Jesus. These martyrs will be bodily resurrected when Jesus returns at the end of the Tribulation period.

"Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt." - Daniel 12:1-2

Following the Tribulation, at the Lord's second coming, all of the Old Testament Saints (excluding the certain ones who already rose in conjunction with Christ's resurrection) will be physically raised as well. These people, collectively known as

Israel, will then experience the fulfillment of all of God's covenant promises which He made to them. The LORD keeps His promises, and He will honor the pledges that He made to Israel during the thousand year period called the Millennium. Following His second coming, Jesus will set-up His earthly kingdom and reign over the earth from Jerusalem.

The resurrection of the Tribulation Saints and the Old Testaments Saints might occur together or separately - who knows? We will call this phase four of the resurrection of the righteous. By this point the Church, the Tribulation Saints, and the Old Testament Saints will all have been physically resurrected and given glorified bodies. Together, they will abide with the LORD eternally.

C. AT THE END OF THE MILLENNIUM

It is possible, perhaps even probable, that people will be born and die during the thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth. Some suggest that there will be survivors of the Tribulation who live on into the Millennium. Scholars are divided on this issue. If any believers actually die during this period, it might necessitate another resurrection following the millennium. The Bible does not speak explicitly about this event, but the implication is there. If there is such a resurrection, it would be the fifth and final phase of the resurrection of the righteous and would occur just prior to the creation of the New Heavens and New Earth. It would occur around the same time as resurrection of the unrighteous.

III. THE RESURRECTION OF THE UNRIGHTEOUS - Mark 9:43-48, Revelation 20:13-15

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. - Revelation 20:13-15

The resurrection of the unrighteous will be a single event. It will take place following the Millennial reign of Christ on earth, right before the advent of the New Heavens and New Earth. At the conclusion of Jesus' thousand year reign, all unsaved people will be resurrected and stand before Jesus at the Great White Throne judgment. There they will be judged based upon the quality of their own works. These works will be

completely insufficient to rescue them from condemnation, as they are but filthy rags before the holy LORD.

After receiving their sentence, the unrighteous will be cast alive into Hell. There they will physically suffer under the unrelenting wrath of God forever because they rejected the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ. Only those whose names are found written in the Book of Life will avoid this horrific fate.

CONCLUSION

In the end, every person will be physically resurrected and will dwell bodily in either Heaven or Hell for all of eternity. Thus, the topic of resurrection is central to the Christian faith. This is why we have spent the last month discussing this issue. We as Christians believe in a literal, physical resurrection of the dead to everlasting life which began with the historical and factual resurrection of Jesus Christ.

God has proven His power to raise the dead through the prophets, through the apostles, and ultimately through His own beloved Son. Someday He will raise us all... including you and me. When your personal resurrection day comes, will you be among the righteous or the unrighteous?