



Why the Resurrection Matters

The World's Only Hope



Sightline™
A CRU MINISTRY

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The World's Only Hope

Hope is in short supply in our culture these days. If life as one sees it now on this pain-filled planet is all there is, then existence is indeed meaningless.

At one point in history, there was a band of people who trusted in someone they fervently believed would truly change the world for good. A handful of devout Jewish people thought a man named Jesus was the Messiah—the deliverer who would break their oppressive bondage under the Romans and set up a permanent and truly godly kingdom on earth.

Their prophet Isaiah had prophesied in the ancient Jewish writings that the Messiah would come and restore all things to a paradise, where there would be no more fighting, oppression, fear, or death (Isa. 11; 35). Everyone would live together in peace forever.

THE SHORTAGE OF HOPE

Modern culture often views meaning as conditional. The Resurrection introduces unconditional hope: the idea that meaning is not created by us, but revealed in history. This matches the ancient Jewish expectation that the Messiah would come to change the world, not just a philosophy.

Imagine the terrible mental and emotional state of that small group of followers as they stood watching the Messiah, their deliverer, breathing his last agonized breath, hung to die as a common criminal on a Roman cross. They had given up everything to follow him. But now here he was, nailed up on a cross. Dying! And dying with him were all the hopes they had placed in him.

THE ENEMY'S SILENCE

It is logically impossible for the disciples to have stolen the body. A group that had just witnessed their Messiah die as a criminal, hung in shame, would be in total despair, not masterminding a heist. If there was a stolen body, the Roman authorities could have crushed the movement by displaying it. Their absolute silence is historical evidence.

Our Resurrection Hope

When Christ was on the cross, it seemed that all had been lost. Death had won. But after three days in a rich man's tomb, Jesus appeared alive again. The news was so shocking that his followers refused to believe it until he presented himself to them physically and invited them to see the nail marks in his hands and feet with their own eyes.

Then Jesus made an amazing claim to his disciples: in the future they too would have resurrected bodies like his, bodies that would never deteriorate, age, or perish. They would realize the one great hope that would bring meaning to an otherwise meaningless existence. They would have new life without death or pain in the presence of a loving God forever.

NOT A GHOST STORY

Ancient Greeks believed in "spirits," but the Disciples insisted on a physical body. Jesus ate food and invited touch: this biological reality provides the rock-solid evidence for the truth of the Resurrection. This distinction between "spirit" and "body" is fundamental to the biblical claim.

That is the great hope Christianity offers to a hopeless world—an afterlife with God, free of pain and suffering, and filled with boundless joy. Despite what many critics claim, belief in the resurrection does not make us “no earthly good.” In reality, it gives us hope for the future and impacts how we treat both people and creation in the present. This belief in eternal life is not a mere pie-in-the-sky idea designed to make us feel good in a hopeless world; it is a belief built on rock-solid evidence.

The Vital Importance of the Resurrection

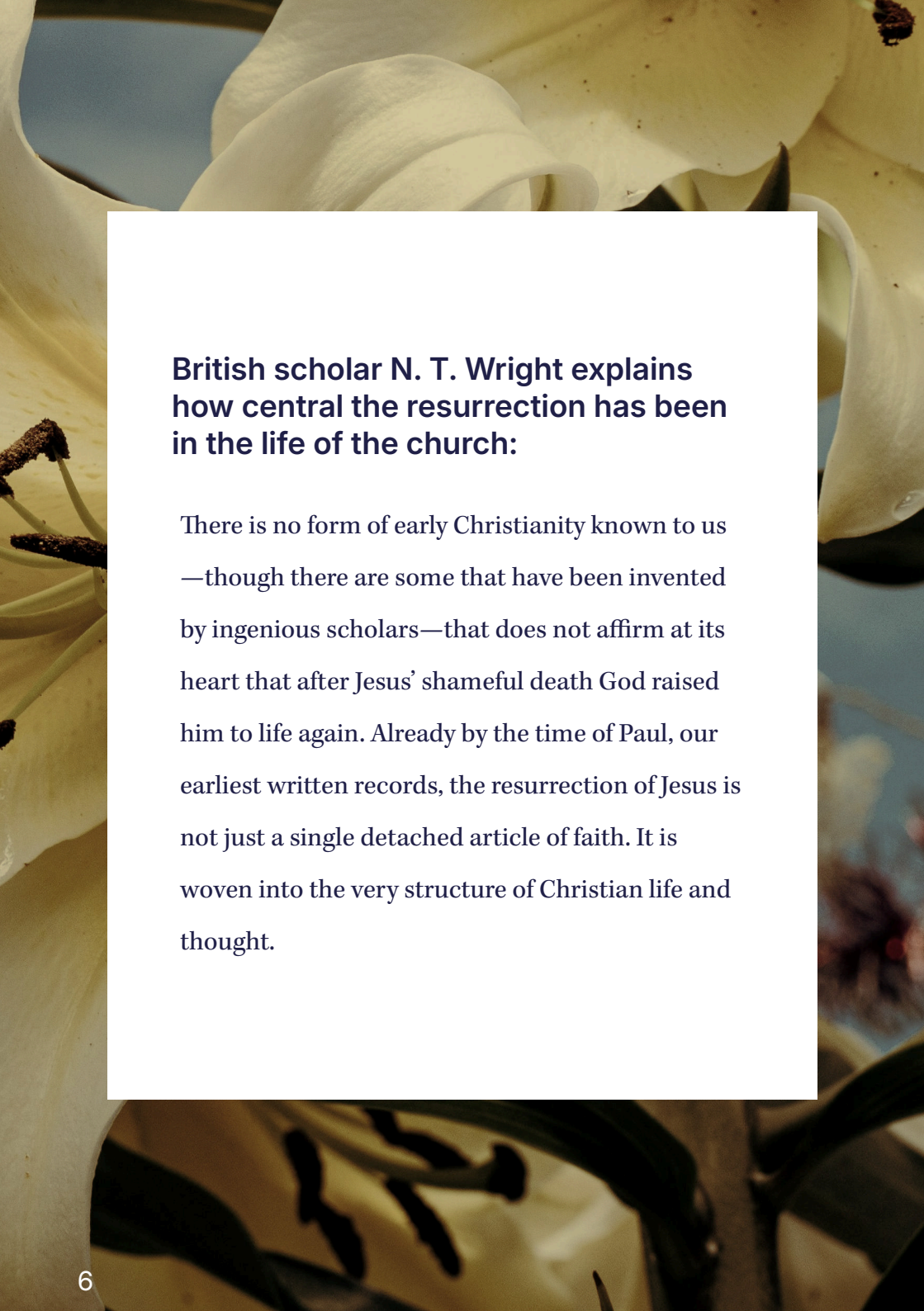
The historical fact of the resurrection is the very foundation of the Christian faith. It is not an optional article of faith—it is the faith! The resurrection of Jesus Christ and Christianity stand or fall together. One cannot be true without the other.

Without the literal, physical resurrection, we might as well forget God, church, and following moral rules. We might as well just “feast and drink, for tomorrow we die!” (1 Cor. 15:32).

On the other hand, if Christ has been raised from the dead, then he is alive at this very moment (1 Cor. 15:4), and we can know him personally. Our sins are forgiven (v. 3), and he has broken the power of death (v. 54). Furthermore, he promises that we too will be resurrected someday (v. 22). We can trust him because he is sovereign over the world (v. 27). He will give us ultimate victory (v. 57) and a meaningful life (v. 58).

SKEPTICS TRANSFORMED

Hardened skeptics like James (Jesus' brother) and Saul (Paul) were transformed into bold leaders after seeing the risen Christ. Saul, who went from persecuting the church to dying for its central message, provides evidence for the reality of the Resurrection. Their transformations defy explanation without the event.



British scholar N. T. Wright explains how central the resurrection has been in the life of the church:

There is no form of early Christianity known to us —though there are some that have been invented by ingenious scholars—that does not affirm at its heart that after Jesus’ shameful death God raised him to life again. Already by the time of Paul, our earliest written records, the resurrection of Jesus is not just a single detached article of faith. It is woven into the very structure of Christian life and thought.

Freedom from the Fear of Death

It is common for humans to fear death. Not only is it extremely difficult to imagine ceasing to exist, it is also terrifying.

Why, exactly, do we fear death? Let us suggest six reasons:

1. Death is mysterious and unknown.
2. We have to face death alone.
3. We are separated from our loved ones.
4. Our personal hopes and dreams will not be realized.
5. Death raises the possibility that we will be annihilated.
6. Death is unavoidable.

While the Bible never promises complete deliverance from the emotionally difficult aspects of death, we are told that victory over the utterly paralyzing fear of it is within our grasp. Truly understanding the biblical doctrine of the resurrection frees us from the debilitating fear of our final journey into the unknown realm.

The resurrection makes it clear that no matter how devastating our struggles, disappointments, and troubles are, they are only temporary. No matter what happens to you, no matter the depth of the tragedy or pain you face, no matter how death stalks you and your loved ones, the resurrection promises you a future of immeasurable good.

Fulfillment of Our Hopes and Desires

Science-fiction writer Isaac Asimov expressed the attitude many have about heaven when he wrote, "I don't believe in the afterlife, so I don't have to spend my whole life fearing hell, or fearing heaven even more. For whatever the tortures of hell, I think the boredom of heaven would be even worse."⁵ Sadly, a similar view of the afterlife is common even among Christians. Our vision of heaven is often limited to an extended, boring, uninspiring church service. Or many, influenced by cartoons and jokes, see it as a place where we will mosey about among clouds in long white gowns while strumming on harps. Somehow our image of heaven has become grotesquely distorted, and the prospect of life after death has not captured our imaginations or transformed our lives.

Such a lack of eternal perspective sets people up for discouragement and sin. Many of them think that if they don't experience certain pleasures now, their chance will be gone and they never will experience them. They adopt this attitude because they carry in their minds a mistaken picture of what heaven is really like. We have been taught too often to spiritualize the new heaven and the new earth with a nonphysical interpretation.



There are serious problems with such a view. People who believe this tend to forget that at the end of each day of the physical creation of the world, God pronounced his work to be good. Everything he made out of atoms and molecules, cells and dirt, he called "good." The new heaven and the new earth can't be merely spiritual (understood as nonphysical) because our physical bodies will be resurrected. A nonphysical resurrection is like a colorless rainbow. It's a contradiction! When the apostle Paul describes our own resurrection, he says,

When the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies. Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled: "Death is swallowed up in victory." (1 Cor. 15:52-54)

Paul doesn't tell us here that we will be bodiless spirits. Indeed, he tells us the opposite. We will have bodies—real bodies like those we have right now, but they will be im-mortal. They will no longer be subject to the ravages of disease, age, and death, and they will never die. They will be absolutely perfect in every detail, stunningly beautiful, immensely strong, utterly healthy, and impervious to aging and death. The world we live in now offers us a glimpse of the joys and pleasures that we will experience when God brings the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. 21).



In his book *Heaven*, Randy Alcorn explains,

“All our lives we’ve been dreaming of the New Earth. Whenever we see beauty in water, wind, flower, deer, man, woman, or child, we catch a glimpse of Heaven. Just like the Garden of Eden, the New Earth will be a place of sensory delight, breathtaking beauty, satisfying relationships, and personal joy.”

We will not live in a sterile environment or float about among endless clouds with nothing to do. We will live on an all-new earth—just like this one, except free from storms, earthquakes, drought, floods, or any other disasters. Things will grow easily, and weeds and thorns will not exist. Animals will not harm us but rather look to us benevolently as their leaders and benefactors. We may not be able to picture everything about our resurrected existence on the new earth, but this we can be absolutely sure of: God created us for delight. He created the earth for our delight and pleasure. Whereas all pleasures are now tainted by human rebellion, he intends none of them to be lost. All that was created will be restored. Because he loves us so deeply, he wants us to experience all the delights he originally intended when he created us.

THE DEMAND FOR EVIDENCE

The first Christians were not gullible believers: they "refused to believe until he presented himself physically." In Luke's Gospel, he writes that his intention was for readers to "know the exact truth." The demand for verifiable proof was part of the original Christian experience, not a modern addition.

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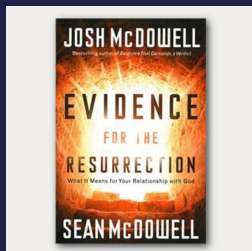
Explore Your Faith

Resources to build your faith this Easter



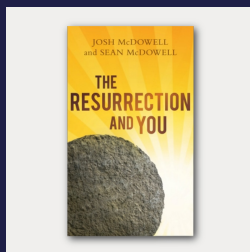
More Than a Carpenter

Skeptic Josh McDowell thought Christians were out of their minds. He ridiculed and insulted them, then decided to combat them with his own thorough research to disprove the claims of Jesus Christ. To his surprise, he discovered the evidence suggested exactly the opposite—that Jesus, instead of being simply a first-century Hebrew carpenter, was so much more.



Evidence for the Resurrection

When Jesus died on the cross and was buried, all seemed lost. But everything changed three days later when he rose from the dead! Then Jesus made some amazing promises. His resurrection would change every aspect of our lives and futures. In this fascinating look at the Gospels' claims and 2000 years of Christian tradition, Josh and Sean McDowell provide compelling evidence for the historical reality of the resurrection—and what it means for us today.



The Resurrection and You

Christ's resurrection is more than a historically documented event to be shared. It's a transforming reality. Yet most Christians don't understand how the resurrection can empower them to live lives of meaning and purpose.

Equip Yourself

