MANY INFALLIBLE PROOFS

Catechism Two, Lesson 27

Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1–20

1. Did The Resurrection Of Jesus Christ Actually Take Place?

Yes. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact, not a theory or a fable. It is basic to apostolic doctrine, and it is the substance of the gospel. Since this fact is so fundamental to the entire teaching of Christianity, God arranged events to make this a solid historical event. Luke, who especially took interest in history, noted the carefulness of God in substantiating the evidence of Christ’s resurrection. Luke, who wrote not only the Gospel bearing his name, but the book of Acts, said:

To whom also he [Christ] shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

2. How Important To The Gospel Message Is The Resurrection?

It is central. Remove the fact of God’s raising Jesus Christ from the dead and the gospel is without power. From the beginning the apostles made both the crucifixion and the resurrection paramount. One without the other lacks meaning. On the cross, Jesus gave Himself as a Lamb without blemish in our stead to pay the penalty for our sins. But through the resurrection and the resulting outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon believers, God demonstrated His acceptance of this sacrifice as atonement for our sin. This is why we would indeed still be in our sin if the resurrection had not taken place.

Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost emphasized the resurrection. It was at this point that the multitude felt conviction and cried out for specific direction how to be saved (Acts 2:32–37).

The Bible tells us that Paul’s habitual way of ministering was to open up the Old Testament Scriptures to demonstrate the reality of the resurrection of Christ as God’s demonstration of the truth of His covenant (Acts 17:2, 3). So important and basic to the gospel did Paul consider the resurrection, that he declared that both the message and our faith would be “vain”—that is empty, hollow, meaningless—if the resurrection of Christ did not actually take place (1 Cor. 15:12–20).

Paul broke the gospel down into historical facts. These were each real events people could investigate for themselves. The five basic facts of the gospel are:

a. Christ died.

b. Christ was buried.

c. Christ rose.

d. Christ appeared.

e. Christ ascended.

We are historic Christians. We believe the historic accounts regarding Jesus Christ. This is not a spiritual story about someone who might have lived sometime. Jesus was a real person who lived, died, and rose again in a real world of space and time. We have actual historical proof of these events.

3. Has God Prepared The World For Christ’s Resurrection?

Yes, in many ways. From the beginning of the Old Testament, preparation for the Messiah had been made. All Scripture inspired of God contained one of two themes: the Messiah’s suffering or His glory. God has also used types and prophetic promises to prefigure the resurrection. In spite of all God did to prepare the minds and hearts of people for this miraculous defeat of death, even Jesus’ disciples were slow to believe it after it had happened. Among the preparations God had made were:

A. Old Testament promises through prophetic insight.

Job is the oldest book in the Bible, and there we read:

For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me (Job 19:25–27).

(See also Psa. 17:15; Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2, 3; Hos. 6:2; 13:14, etc.)

B. Old Testament types foreshadowed the fulfillment in Christ.

(1) Aaron’s rod that budded (Num. 17:8).

(2) Jonah three days in the fish (Jon. 2; Matt. 12:40).

(3) Abraham’s faith in offering Isaac embraced resurrection (Gen. 22:5, 8; Heb. 11:17–19).

C. Old Testament miracles of people raised from the dead (1 Kings 17:21–24; 2 Kings 4:32–35).

These people were raised from the dead and their mortal bodies restored. They died again at a later time. Christ arose with a new body and will never die again. Nevertheless, these miracles demonstrated that death is not final.

D. God’s revelation of Himself as the God of resurrection through His name.

Jesus said unto her, I AM the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live (John 11:25, caps mine).

(See also Exod. 3:6; Matt. 22:31, 32; Luke 20:37, 38.)

E. Jesus repeatedly predicted His own resurrection and promised to meet His disciples in Galilee after His death, burial, and resurrection.

For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day (Mark 9:31).

But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee (Matt. 26:32).

(See also Mark 8:31; Luke 18:33; John 2:19, 21; Matt. 16:21; 17:22, 23, etc.)

F. Christ’s declaration and demonstration of His power over death.

(1) In healing fatal diseases and reversing the processes of death (Mark 1:40–45 [leprosy]; Matt. 9:1–8 [palsy]).

(2) In raising people from the dead (Luke 7:11–17; 8:49–56; Matt. 11:5; John 5:21).

(3) In restoring Lazarus even after corruption had begun (John 11:38–46).

(4) In stating that no one took His life, but He gave it and had power to take it up again—a prerogative belonging only to God (John 10:17, 18).

4. Did People Expect Jesus To Rise Again?

For the most part not. In spite of God’s careful and elaborate preparation of the faith of His people, believing in resurrection from the dead was too much for them. His disciples did not take Him seriously. They were too taken up with thoughts of an earthly kingdom and the splendor of an earthly king.

The only people who seem to have paid any attention to Christ’s words were His enemies. They took Him seriously enough to make sure His tomb was guarded. Perhaps some of His followers would steal the body and attempt to claim He had risen. They would prevent this by sealing the tomb and placing a Roman guard to secure it. In spite of their precautions, however, He arose. Their measures then became a part of the many infallible proofs that Christ had indeed risen from the dead (Matt. 27:62–66).

5. What Are Some Of The Infallible Proofs Of Jesus’ Resurrection?

First we need to say something about apologetics, that is the science of arguing to prove the truth of theology. It is impossible to prove anything to those whose wills are set against believing. In fact, Jesus Himself said that even resurrection from the dead would not be believed by those who would not accept the inspiration and truthfulness of the Scriptures. This was the whole point of His story about Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16. He quoted Abraham as saying:

… If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead (Luke 16:31).

But Jesus also promised that those who willed to do His will—who would allow themselves to be

persuaded to faith—would know whether or not He spoke truth. Remember, when we studied faith toward God, we said that it was receptivity to God’s inner persuasion. Outward proofs such as these we are about to examine will add joy and confidence to those who already believe. They will also aid the honest doubter—the one who wants to be persuaded but finds it difficult. Unbelief, on the other hand, will only be hardened into cynicism when confronted with truth. Unbelief is the stubborn refusal to believe.

Among the many evidences of the factualness of the historical account of Jesus’ resurrection are the following:

A. The empty tomb (Matt. 28:5–8; Mark 16:2–8; Luke 24:1–12; John 20:1–10).

The small variations in detail make these reports all the more reliable. Human witnesses differ in their accounts of anything. We could well suspect deliberate attempt to tamper with the accounts if they were all identical.

Jesus’ grave clothes were left undisturbed, but His body—gone!

B. Jesus’ changed appearance after resurrection (John 20:14–16; 21:4; Luke 24:16).

People see what they expect to see. Even those close to Jesus were not expecting to see Him alive. He had to speak or do some characteristic mannerism before they recognized Him. His body was the same and yet somehow different.

C. The sudden emergence of the New Testament Church.

From a small group of frightened and disoriented disciples huddled behind locked doors for fear of the Jews, came a Church that quickly turned the world upside down. This transformation required both the resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

D. God’s covenant people changed their day of worship to the first day of the week.

For centuries the Jews had observed the Sabbath as part of their covenant-keeping. But after the resurrection, the followers of Jesus came together on the first day of the week expecting to find His presence. He had risen after making a better covenant, and the older tradition was no longer relevant.

E. The Holy Spirit’s inspired interpretation of Old Testament Scriptures to explain the resurrection.

The Bible is always its own best commentary. If something is a type or a prophecy, it will later be spelled out in the New Testament. This is precisely what we find regarding the resurrection. Jesus, Peter, Paul, and others found new meaning as the Spirit applied the familiar Old Testament passages to the historic event of the resurrection. Some of these familiar passages were as follows:

(1) Psalm 16:8–11

(2) Psalm 2:6, 7

(3) Psalm 118:22–24

(4) Daniel 12:2, 3

It is an interesting study to take these and other Scriptures relating to the resurrection and glory of Christ and follow their development through the Old Testament on into the New Testament. Often something is added to them each time they are quoted. This was where the early Church found their sermon material.

Home Study: Lesson 27

Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What are the five basic facts of the gospel?

a. Christ\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

b. Christ\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

c. Christ\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

d. Christ\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

e. Christ\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

2. How had God prepared the world for Christ’s resurrection?

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

3. Who expected Jesus to rise again?

4. List some of the “Infallible proofs” of Jesus’ resurrection.

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

5. Write out 1 Corinthians 15:1–5.