

Elementary Doctrines Resurrection of the Dead

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As we continue our studies on the Elementary Doctrines I would suspect that no doctrine is more foundational than the resurrection of the dead. There are two elements to the resurrection of the dead that I'd like for us to consider—and for those of you who may be listening to this as the first broadcast, we are establishing, once again, the elementary doctrines, or the foundational doctrines which should be at the heart of the belief structure of every believer. (Inserted – actual verse—**“Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.” – Hebrews 6:1,2**) And you can readily see that the absence of the understanding of these elementary things allows our enemy to have great victories over us in ordinary situations.

We ought to be strong and courageous and growing up in the things of God but when we neglect these basic foundations, in some senses we are like the person whom Jesus described at the end of the Sermon on the Mount in the 7th chapter of **Matthew** as “building upon the sand”. (Inserted – actual verse—**“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” – Matthew 7:24-27**)

In the present church culture, personalities have become more important than truth and truth is not just information

and ideas; truth is not even what is logical or reasonable. Truth is what stands the test between the eternal and time because heaven and earth will pass away but what is true cannot be shaken. What is true is not just what is factually true; what is true is more like: what are the rules, what are the laws of nature? If you were to analogize to, say, the laws of thermodynamics and nature and to try to find the principles that are foundational to our walk in the Kingdom, these elementary things would be like that. And perhaps no concept is more basic and becomes more necessary that we understand it than the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.

There are two elements to this that I'd like for us to explore. As so commonly is the case, God shows us the "big picture" and then He shows us the personal application and in the big picture we are looking at the resurrection of Jesus himself from the dead and then we are looking at the applications to ourselves in terms of the dual resurrection that we experience. First there is Jesus' own resurrection from the dead which is the template—it sets up the whole model of our understanding—and you will see in a moment as we read from **I Corinthians, the 15th chapter**, that Paul considers the resurrection of the dead and the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead to be the very foundation stone of our belief as Christians and our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ rises or falls on whether or not the resurrection of the dead is, in fact, true.

We live in a time in which even "Christian theologians" are known for assailing something as foundational as the resurrection of the dead. Such a person cannot be a believer in Jesus Christ—cannot be a believer in the fact of who Jesus is—because the testimony that was set forth on the day of Pentecost by the twelve who were selected was the testimony of eyewitnesses and they testified to the Jewish nation—in the city of Jerusalem—they testified that God raised Jesus from the dead and made Him both Lord and Christ. Paul picks up this theme in **I Corinthians, the 15th chapter**, and he explores it fully when he says—beginning at verse one—"**Now brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.**" Very strong words, and then he says that he is giving to them the things that he has received from the Lord. Now he launches into it in verse 12 where he says, "**But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, (here it is in the plainest of language) our preaching is useless and so is your faith.**" (Inserted – **I Corinthians 15:1,2; 12-14**)

Now there are famous theologians today who question such things as the virgin birth and there are others of equal

fame who question the resurrection of the dead and yet they claim to be followers of Jesus. Their problem is that they do not understand how it is possible for someone who was dead to be raised. Well it is a pretty simple thing really. If no one is raised from the dead then once you die, you just die. Their theology then is the theology of humanism because the only value to being a Christian is that it's a different lifestyle. But if it's just a different lifestyle of what real value is it? How do you test and prove that this lifestyle is better than, say, another lifestyle?

Well they will point out that the lifestyle that's based on Jesus' teachings—not on the person of Jesus and not on the resurrection of the dead but just on Jesus' teachings—they say, “Well, that will result in more peace, or it will result in a better or more humane society because you will tend to love your neighbor as you love yourself.” Well that's just an alternative; it's not better unless there is a morality that is a standard by itself. To simply say, “Here is *this* thing and here is *this* thing and this one is better than this thing.” The question is *what standard are you using*, because those who agree with the other thing are equally persuaded that that is the better thing.

So today when you hear these theologians speaking about such things as “there is no resurrection of the dead”, Paul would say, “If the dead are not raised then we are foolish and miserable people.” If Jesus is not raised from the dead, no one ought to believe in the Christian philosophy and if you are to choose to, then it's just another belief structure. Oddly enough, people who hold so lightly to the Christian faith and yet believe that they are representatives of the Christian faith will very quickly turn to a global religion when it is offered because there is nothing unique, nothing essentially valuable and perhaps not even anything really that distinct about being a Christian.

We are laying claim, as Christians, to being the ones who have “the truth” and we base that claim on the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead. Because if He, in fact, was raised from the dead—which we claim and believe—then God did the unthinkable. God vindicated everything Jesus said as true. Now if Jesus is not raised from the dead then it really does not matter what god you believe in and it really does not matter what religious form you adopt. We are the only ones in all of the entire religious spectrum who believe in a living God. Jesus is the living God because He is raised from the dead and we say that the resurrection of the dead—and specifically the resurrection of Jesus from the dead—is the basis of our hope. Because we believe—inasmuch as God raised Him from the dead—that everything that He said is true.

Because you see, if Jesus claimed to be “*the way*”—not “a” way, not “a” truth, not “a” life—but “*the way*”, that's exclusivity, that's very narrow. Jesus is the most narrow of all persons and He claims about himself that He is

“the” way and “the” truth and “the” life. In other words He is the pattern for righteousness as a lifestyle; He is the declaration of the truth. He’s going beyond saying what He was saying was true, He’s saying, “I am the embodiment of the truth.” So therefore truth is not just belief, *truth is a person*. If Jesus is right, truth is a person.

The Book [Bible] speaks and records the truth—speaks of the truth and records the truth—but the Book does not claim that *it* is the truth. The Book claims that it contains the truth because it contains accurate representations of the person who is the truth. Even the Book says that the truth is a person. The proof that the truth is a person then... the proof of it is that God raised Him from the dead because if he were not the truth there would be no reason for God to raise Him from the dead. In fact if God were to raise Him from the dead and He had not in fact been the truth then God would participate in the perpetration of a fraud upon all those who, by reason of the resurrection, declare their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The resurrection stands as the foundation of what we believe to be true. Now God was so particular about this that He made the qualification for being an apostle to be contingent upon being a witness of the resurrection.

Barsabbas Justus and Matthias were selected to replace Judas according to the Book of Acts, the 1st chapter.

(Inserted – actual verse—“ **‘For,’ said Peter, ‘it is written in the book of Psalms, “ ‘May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,’ and, “ ‘May another take his place of leadership.’ Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.’” - Acts 1:20-22)**

After the disciples had gone back from the Mount of Olives where Jesus ascended into heaven, one of the first orders of business was the replacement of Judas, who had fallen. Peter set forth two criteria: they were that the one to replace Judas should have been a follower of Jesus from the time that He was baptized by John to the time that He was crucified and then the second qualification was that he be a witness of the resurrection. Now here is an interesting point: since Jesus had already chosen the twelve and one of them had fallen, why not simply leave the number at eleven? While you are think about that, here is another consideration: when Peter set forth the criteria for the selection of a replacement there were two of them who were qualified—Barsabbas Justus and Matthias. Well, since they were both qualified why not choose both? If you are going to choose, choose both. It could reasonably have been said that another might fall, you’d have a spare; you don’t have to go through this process every so often.

So here is the dilemma: you have eleven, all of whom were handpicked by Jesus, why replace the one who had fallen? Why not leave it at eleven? But since you *are* going to replace him and two are qualified, two are eligible and it could be either one, why not choose both, why cast lots? There did not appear an overabundance of apostles at that point so if you are going to choose and two are qualified then choose both of them. Well obviously eleven wouldn't do and thirteen wouldn't do. Why? Because of the significance of the number twelve.

What was the significance of the number twelve? Well the answer is that in the Jewish legal customs of that day when twelve witnesses testified to a matter the matter was conclusively presumed to be true. So when twelve witnesses testified before the Bethden then whatever they said was—by that declaration—a conclusion, a presumption that it was true because that was the form of truth required. So that's why the number eleven would not do and that's why the number thirteen wouldn't do—it was twelve.

Now what were these two qualifications about? These two qualifications were to establish the participant—the one to replace Judas (Matthias in this case)—to establish him as a witness and in **Acts, chapter 2**, this is exactly what was said. It says, “Peter stood up with the twelve and he said, ‘You took Jesus and with wicked hands you crucified and slew the Son of God and God raised Him from the dead.’” And he said, “Of this, we are all witnesses.” (Inserted – actual verse—“ **Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him: “ ‘I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.’ ‘Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.’” – Acts 2:22-32) And the declaration is that they were witnesses.**

Now when the audiences heard this it says that they were “cut to the heart” and they said, “Men and brethren, what

shall we do?” (Inserted – actual verse—“**When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’**” – Acts 2:37) It showed that the twelve, in their testimony as witnesses, were totally believable. Why did God go through this process of selecting twelve witnesses? The answer was that He wanted to guarantee the testimony of Jesus’ resurrection because *that* testimony is the very foundation of the Christian faith.

There are other references here, principally in the book of **I Corinthians the 15th chapter**, there are other references to this. It speaks of how Jesus was seen alive at one time on one occasion by over 500 people. As we continue on from our reading in the **15th chapter** where we were before, at **verse 14**, it says that Jesus was seen alive by over 500 people at the same time. (Inserted – actual verse—“**After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.**” – **I Corinthians 15:6**) So what I wanted to show was how carefully God chose to establish the resurrection of the dead as being absolutely essential.

The resurrection of the dead therefore is the foundation of the Christian faith and the testimony of the resurrection is the testimony of God himself having raised Jesus from the dead. In this respect, we who have fled to place our hope in the Lord Jesus Christ as the true and living God are not meant to place our hope merely in a *belief* but in the guarantee that we have received from God that He raised Jesus from the dead. I tell you this: in this time that is immediately ahead of us, one of the great trials that will come upon the earth—and it will sorely test our faith—is “how do you define God”.

Today everyone is talking about God and [about] being the people of God but today in the contemporary religious setting God may be—in the minds of some—God may be Buddha, God may be Allah, God may be whomever you want God to be, including your own personal God. But this time that is before us will be characterized by a very strict definition of God and that definition of God will be: the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because who Jesus is and what He says is actually how God is meant to be understood for us and in spite of the popular political notion surrounding God, God has not changed and who He is will not be subject to new and different reinterpretations.

The only one that we manage to deceive—by defining god in such a way as to include everything including that which is false—the only one who is deceived are those foolish enough to believe in the wrong god. The mere fact that you should choose to believe in god doesn’t mean that you believe in the right god. The 1.2 billion Muslims

who believe in Allah as god have placed their faith in the wrong god. Likewise, the billions of Indians and Chinese who believe in Hinduism and its offshoot Buddhism also believe in the wrong god because there is only one god and that god is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore Jesus' claim that He is the way and the truth and the life cannot be interpreted in any other way except that it is an exclusive access to God limited to who Jesus actually is. (Inserted – actual verse—**“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” – John 14:6**) The entire foundation of this—its basis, the basis of this truth—we offer as the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. All of what we believe stands or falls on whether or not it is true that Jesus was raised from the dead. Now if a person does not believe that Jesus was raised from the dead he cannot be a believer in Jesus Christ because it is not just some philosophical idea, it is that Jesus *is* the Living God... *the Living God*. And among all of the religions of the earth the true Christian is the only one who believes in a Living God: the person who is the Lord Jesus Christ, He is the Living God and the evidence of that for us who believe in Jesus as the Living God is the resurrection of the dead.

This leads to two other vastly important concepts: one is our own expectation of being transformed, in a manner of speaking—resurrected also—while we are alive... transformed from human beings who are destined for destruction to people who are resurrected, as it were, from the dead. And I will deal with that in the next broadcast. Similarly, we also expect that there will be a resurrection of the dead who believe in Christ and that will be the first resurrection of all those who physically have died and I'd like to raise this question and we'll answer it also in a subsequent broadcast and that is this: if those who believe in Jesus Christ, if when they die they go to heaven why is there a need for them subsequently to be resurrected from the dead?

If you are already in heaven what need is there for you to be resurrected from the dead? These are two vitally important questions. One would be how you as a person living today might experience a resurrection that results in a transformation of your nature and if you are once dead and gone to heaven why must you be resurrected from the dead? It requires very little imagination to see that if you do not understand these vastly important subjects then your foundation is either non-existent or what exists of it is very weak. That is why it is necessary for us to teach these vastly important subjects called The Elementary Doctrines. I hope that you will continue to study with us as we reveal the fullness of all of this. I'm Sam Soleyn, God bless you and I'll see you again.

Scripture References:

Hebrews 6:1,2
Matthew 7:24-27
I Corinthians 15:1,2; 12-14
Acts 1:20-22
Acts 2:22-32
Acts 2:37
I Corinthians 15:6
John 14:6